FEED BACK

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ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

Ito po ang tuwid na daan (This is right path or road). This has been the campaign and post-election motto of incoming Philippine President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, son of former President Corazon C. Aquino who was unexpectedly catapulted into the 2010 Presidential race after his mother's demise last year.

After nine years of suffering, tragedies, and atrocities under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, any alternative seems better. Unfortunately, Aquino does not seem to offer substantial reforms needed to lift the country out of this socio-economic and environmental quagmire; promising much in terms of his anti-graft and corruption platform but remaining silent on the fundamental policy and strategic reforms long demanded by the people.

This honeymoon period with the new leader of the land will not last long: Aquino must make his chosen path clear, soon, or face the distrust of the people. His metaphor of choice is one, indeed, that denotes the act of having to forsake one road for the other, as poet Robert Frost eloquently captured in a piece way back in 1916: *Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,/ And sorry I could not travel both/ And be one traveler, long I stood/ And looked down one as far as I could.*

Which path shall the Aquino administration take? The one carved out by an elite landlord heritage, which even his parents—though hailed as icons of democracy durng the Marcos dictatorship for their sacrifices—have not been able to fully disengage from? Or the one that the Filipino people are clamoring for the government to pursue?

The Aquino administration needs to be reminded of the failures of its predecessor, in the quest to seek what is right and just. Thus, in this issue of *Feedback*, we recall the tainted and dirty environmental legacy of the outgoing Arroyo administration, crimes for which no one has been made acccountable for to date. Unfortunately, indications of Aquino straying away from the right path are already manifest, such as in the President's first State of the Nation Address.

Will Aquino go the same path as Arroyo did? Problems and issues which have started during the last administration still hound the current one: a reality that must be addressed. Among these is the ongoing campaign of indigenous peoples in Mindanao to protest the impending large-scale mining operations in Tampakan, which is expected to be among the largest projects of its kind in Southeast Asia. The project was approved under previous administrations, revived during Arroyo's term, and stands to go into full operations if not stopped under Aquino. This is given special focus in this issue of *Feedback*, where we share the summary of results of CEC's environmental investigative mission in some of the mining-affected communities as well as reflections by our foreign volunteer interns on their impressions on the Philippine environmental situation and struggle.

The growing challenges of our times are also birthing more environmental campaigns, advocacies, and causes—a process needing more leaders, educators, and creators of change from the grassroots. CEC-Phils hopes to contribute to that process by training and more people who can effectively respond to facing socio-ecological problems at the local levels. Education for adults and youth can take on various forms: from teaching young musicians how to compose songs for awareness-raising to holding of advocacy events to discuss and take action on critical concerns, or raising general capabilities of partners to respond effectively to environmental problems. In this issue, we share the story of how the Center's new pilot course for environmental cadres started—something which we hope to pursue and develop even further. To extend the earlier metaphor, we hope to contribute to the process of teaching people how to follow where the road of environmental struggle leads them without getting lost—or better yet, enabling more people and communities to create their own paths.

Lastly, this issue also gives space to quietly acknowledge the passing of a great scientist, internationalist, and revolutionary Joan Hinton last June. Hinton, belonging to the team of scientists that developed the atomic bomb, has chosen to tread the path less travelled by her contemporaries: that of selfless service to the people. Her example, combined with the efforts of contemporaries and countless others who stand for the environment and people's welfare shall—with hope—lead more and more people along these "roads less travelled" and to a time when all can look back and say: *I took the one less traveled by,/ And that has made all the difference.*

After nine years of suffering, tragedies, and atrocities under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, any alternative seems better. Unfortunately, Aquino does not seem to offer substantial reforms

Green groups monitor transition from Arroyo to Aquino

Environmental organizations drew up a list of "environmental crimes" by the administration of outgoing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and aired challenges addressed to the new Philippine President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, in a forum at the University of the Philippines in Diliman last 23 July 2010.

Entitled the *State of the Philippine Environment and the Challenges for the P-Noy administration*, the forum posed the challenge to the incoming Aquino administration to reverse the Arroyo administration's legacy of ecological destruction, plunder of natural resources, and human rights violations of environmental defenders.

Meggie Nolasco of Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment presented the network's list of major environmental crimes by the Arroyo administration. Sonny Africa of Ibon Foundation gave an analysis of the incoming Aquino administration's programs and development frameworks. Lisa Ito of the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines gave a presentation on the people's environmental demands from the Aquino administration.

Educational discussions focus on post-election issues, mining:

CEC's monthly educational discussizons, entitled *Talakayan sa Kubo* (TK), focused on orienting staff, board members, and network organizations on timely concerns following the 2010 national elections.

Key updates on the post-electoral situation and prospects were discussed by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan Secretary-General Renato Reyes in the TK held last May 26, while the need for alternative and comprehensive socio-economic reforms was discussed in the August TK by Ibon Research Head and economist Sonny Africa and researcher Alvin Firmeza.

The impacts of continuing large-scale mining projects were discussed in two separate TKs this quarter. Updates on socio-economic and ecological impacts of mining operations in Cagayan Valley in northern Luzon were discussed by representatives of regional organizations SAVE Cagayan Valley and Taripnong last June 23. Meanwhile, another TK on July 7 discussed the impending takeover of large-scale mining over the small-scale mining town of Diwalwal in the southern Mindanao region (SMR). Resource speakers for this were indigenous peoples leaders Kerlan Faragel from Panalipdan-SMR and Joan Jaime from the Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas.

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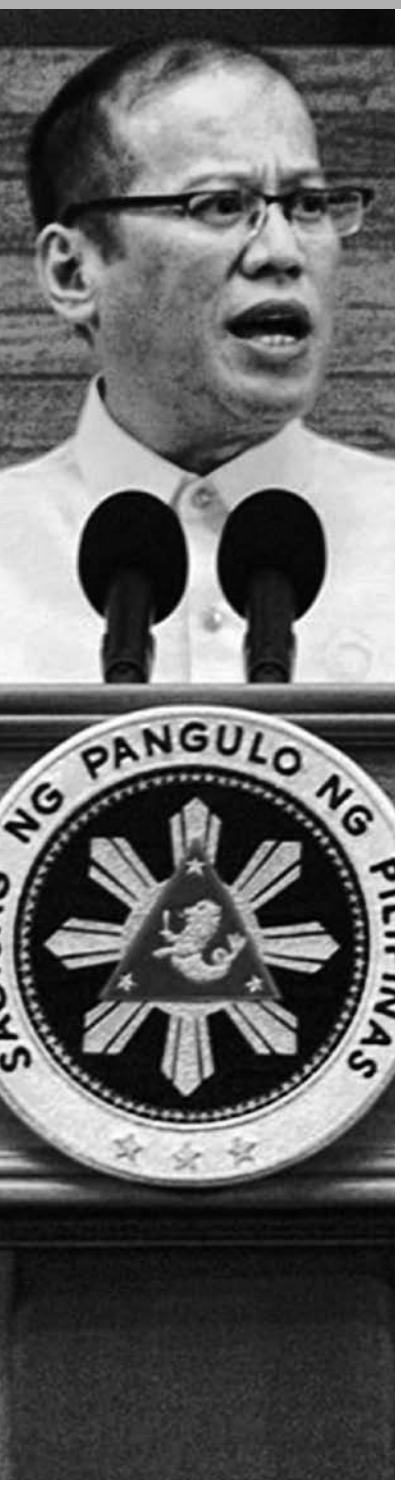
RESONATING ARROYO: REVIEWING PRESIDENT AQUINO'S FIRST STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS



LISA ITO

Each year, the President's State of the Nation Address (SONA) symbolically outlines the trajectory of each administration. It is not just an accounting of accomplishments, but an assertion of major policy thrusts and priorities.

The first SONA delivered by President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III after his first three weeks in office left a nation wanting, not just in terms of substance, but also of commitment to his promise of change. This article examines the text of the President's SONA and weighs it against the pressing environmental issues left unresolved by the Arroyo administration. Already, indications of Pres. Aquino's noncommital stance towards environmental and people's struggles is revealed by the gaps in his SONA speech–what was said and what was left unspoken.

> *Ititigil na natin ang paglulustay sa salapi ng bayan. Tatanggalin natin ang mga proyektong mali... Mga proyekto po itong walang saysay, hindi pinag-aralan at hindi pinaghandaan, kaya parang kabuteng sumusulpot. (We shall stop the waste of the people's funds. We shall remove wrong projects. These are irrrelevant projects, unexamined and ill-prepared, which are sprouting like mushrooms.)*

A lengthy portion of the President's SONA is devoted to stressing the point of good governance and the fight against corruption, two traits sorely missing in his predecessor's nine-year regime. Pres. Aquino's highlighting of the massive budget deficit and questionable government expenditures—such as the inequitable distribution of calamity and water infrastructure funds—did call attention to the spectre of deep-seated and rampant corruption in government. However, the "discoveries" he cited pale in comparison to the nine-year list of still unresolved scandals left by the Arroyo administration, and are but extensions of such a tainted legacy of governance.

While this is indeed a cause for concern and rebuke, Aquino's emphasis on the current state of the nation's coffers—bled dry by bureaucrats—drumbeats the second central point of his inaugural address: the agreement to open up more national assets and resources to private and foreign control in order to finance this budget deficit.

> *Ito ang magiging solusyon: mga Public-Private Partnerships...Marami na pong nag-alok at nagmungkahi sa atin, mula lokal hanggang dayuhang negosyante, na magpuno ng iba't ibang pangangailangan. (This will be the solution: public-private partnerships. Many, from local to foreign investors, are encouraging and proposing to fill in our different needs).*

The President's SONA emphasizes the government's willingness to go into "public-private partnerships" in order to fund infrastructure and expenditures for education, tourism, export-oriented agriculture, mass transportation, health, military and police services, and more. Infusion of private and foreign capital into these industries supposedly will create jobs. Among the possible projects mentioned was the construction of an expressway stretching from Manila through Central Luzon to Cagayan Valley, as well as leases of the military's key naval infrastructures to private investors.

However, this "innovative" trajectory is hardly new, hardly novel, and hardly the solution to the Philippine's current socio-economic and fiscal woes. Rather than embark on a comprehensive assessment of what the country needs to meet the basic needs of the people and systematically build infrastructure and industries on a national scale, the Aquino administration's proposal for private-public partnership is premised what external investors want, not on what the people need. This is reflected in some of the concrete measures that the President announced, such as the move to make processing of Build-Operate-Transfer projects and company registrations much faster for investors.

In contrast, nothing is mentioned about the process of securing social acceptability, economic and ecological sustainability, and assessment and plans related to environmental impacts. It seems that the only shade of green in President

Aquino's SONA is the color of money.

Kailangang repasuhin ang ating mga batas. Nanawagan po akong umpisahan na ang rekodipikasyon ng ating mga batas, upang siguruhing magkakatugma sila at hindi salu-salungat. (We need to review our laws. I am calling for the recodification of our laws, to ensure that they are harmonized and not contradictory).

There is a long standing call to review the country's contradictory laws and policies. The SONA shows that the Aquino administration's legislative reform framework is oriented more on creating a favorable climate for foreign and private investors and to prop up its anti-graft and corruption platform. This is manifested n the nature of the various legislative proposals that the President identified as urgent: the passage of new bills on land use, transparency in procurement, protection of whistleblowers, and the like.

While it attempts to prop up the issue of transparency in governance, the Aquino administration has so far remained silent on the chronic need to review and repeal existing laws and policies pertaining to the ownership, control, management, and development of Philippine lands and natural resources. The President has to date not released any significant policy statement on the fate of controversial laws whose frameworks and loopholes have historically reinforced the plunder of the country's national patrimony by local and foreign elites, such as Presidential Decree 705 (Forestry Code of 1975), Republic Act 7942 (Mining Act of 1995), and the Fisheries Code. He seems to be turning his other cheek around with regards to the policies aggressively promoted under the Arroyo administration, such as the liberalization of the Philippine mining industry.

While environmental groups, indigenous peoples communities, and other organizations have long been challenging the government to declare a moratorium on large-scale mining, conduct a review of existing mining policies in the country, and seek justice and accountability for social and ecological crimes related to large-scale mining operations, the Aquino administration—by all indications in this first SONA—has not yet done anything to address these legitimate and urgent demands.

Singkuwenta porsyento po ng mga insidente ng extralegal killings ang patungo na sa kanilang resolusyon..Pananagutin natin ang mga mamamatay-tao. (Fifty percent of incidents of extralegal killings are towards resolution. We shall make the murderers pay.)

The infamous hallmarks of the Arroyo administration were the human rights violations (HRVs), particularly extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and enforced disappearances. Among those killed were environmental advocates and community leaders who have opposed development projects such as mining. The killings continued even during Aquino's first days in office.

In his SONA, President Aquino claims to have identified the perpetrators of three out of six EJKs under his term and vowed to seek justice for the human rights atrocities which happened in the past nine years. But justice remains elusive for most of the people killed under the Arroyo administration. No significant move has been made to oppose and reverse the counter-insurgency policy of Oplan Bantay Laya, the general framework under which many of the HRVs have occurred. Many political prisoners under Arroyo, such as the Morong 43, remain in detention to date.

Ang pagtanaw sa interes ng nakakarami; ang pagkapit sa prinsipyo; at ang pagiging tapat sa sinumpaan nating tungkulin bilang lingkod-bayan. Ito po ang tuwid na daan. (To look at the interest of the majority; to uphold principles; and to be loyal to our sworn duty as public servants. This is the straight path.)

This is a movingly eloquent and noble promise to the nation. Unfortunately, more than a hundred days in office, it has yet to be fulfilled, in concrete and meaningful terms. The post-SONA challenge to President Aquino remains: to heed the people's clamor for genuine agrarian reform, just wages, jobs, rights, and defense of our national patrimony against plunder. Only then shall history attest that this Aquino has pursued the right path.

The post-SONA challenge to President Aquino remains: to heed the people's clamor for genuine agrarian reform, just wages, jobs, rights, and defense of our national patrimony against plunder.

REFERENCES:

- *Indigenous Peoples' Agenda: A Challenge to the New Administration Under the Leadership of President Benigno Simeon Aquino III*. Adopted and signed on 9 August 2010 during the Celebration of the World's Indigenous Peoples' Day in the Philippines held at the University Hotel, UP Diliman Campus, Quezon City.
- *Full Transcript of the State of the Nation Address of His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III President of the Philippines to the Congress of the Philippines Session Hall of the House of Representatives,* July 26, 2010 [Batasan Pambansa Complex, Quezon City]

ARROYO'S LEGACY, AQUINO'S BURDEN: STATE OF THE PHILIPPINE ENVIRONMENT

Former President Gloria Arroyo's nine long years in power has been a disaster, literally and figuratively.

CHEAMSON BOONGALING

The May 2010 elections is not just a day of suffrage for Filipinos. It marked the end of an era of one, if not the worst, Presidents the country ever had.

Former President Gloria Arroyo's nine long years in power has been a disaster, literally and figuratively. Its policies, projects, and initiatives (or even the lack of initiatives) have caused much destruction, plunder and pollution and have exacerbated the current state of chronic crisis.

As Arroyo prepares to leave office on June 30, campaign group Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment listed down her administration's environmental crimes: conscious, odious offenses that are part of a systemic practice and policy that result in massive environmental destruction, attacks on human rights and dignities of a community or group of persons, and poses a threat to the present and future generations.

For incoming President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, this list can serve as a reminder of paths not to be taken, and a challenge to deliver justice to the victims of such crimes and hold the perpetrators accountable.

LARGE-SCALE MINING OFFENSIVE

Arroyo's mining revitalization program liberalized the Philippine mining industry, allowing and encouraging foreign transnational corporations (TNCs) to proliferate and operate large-scale mining projects at the expense of affected communities and their environment. This has led to the rapid increase in the extraction and export of our mineral resources (*see Figures 1 and 2*). Government data indicates that more than 95% of metals extracted were exported.

Since 2003, Arroyo has identified more than 62 priority large-scale mining projects, most of which are owned by foreign TNCs. As of March 31, 2010, there were 382 mining tenements covering 843,316.58 hectares across the country. There are 2,624 mining concession applications that being processed by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Of these, 13 new contracts have been approved as of March 2010.

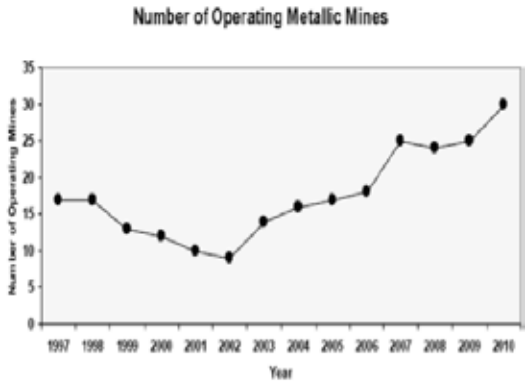


Figure 1. Number of Operating Metallic Mines.
Source: Mines and Geosciences Bureau

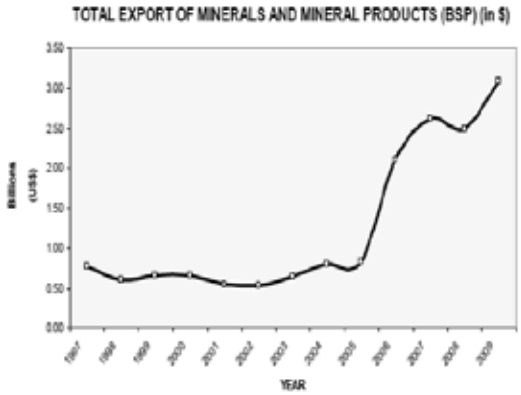


Figure 2. Total Export of Mineral and Mineral Products
Source: Mines and Geosciences Bureau

Mining firms have promised development, but what mining communities experienced were adverse environmental consequences, depletion of mineral resources, displacement of indigenous peoples, upland settlers, and communities dependent on the concession area's ecosystems, loss of livelihood, impacts on community health, and violations of civil and human rights such as killings and militarization.

Some of the major projects that have caused much negative impact on the local environment are the Japanese Rio Tuba Nickel Mining in Palawan, Canadian TVI Mining in Zamboanga del Norte and New Zealander Oceana Gold Corp. Mining in Nueva Vizcaya, all of which started development and operation during Arroyo's administration.

The case of Rapu-Rapu island under Lafayette Mining is another example. The company started commercially operating in May 2005 and has incurred at least four fish kills in the surrounding waters, reaching as far as Albay Gulf. In April 2008, Lafayette declared bankruptcy and sold the project to Korea Resources Corporation, LG International, and Malaysian Smelting Corporation. By 2009, the new foreign owners resumed mining operations.

MASSIVE DEFORESTATION AND INEFFECTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

By the late 1980's, the Philippines was already one of the most severely deforested areas in Asia. As a knee-jerk response, the government stopped issuing Timber Licensing Agreements (TLAs) in 1987 but has yet to implement a genuine and comprehensive reforestation program.

When Arroyo came to power in 2001, she lifted these log bans one by one and farmed out commercial logging permits. Between January 2001 and 2004, TLAs and Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) contracts were again issued. As of December 2007, there are eight active TLAs covering an area of 420,555 hectares: two are found in Aurora, two in Samar, one in Zamboanga del Sur, one in Davao del Norte, and two in Surigao del Sur.

Before Arroyo's term, there were already 23 IFMAs covering a total area of 191,250.60 hectares. As of 2008, there are 146 operational IFMAs covering around 767,094 hectares. An IFMA contract allows its holder not just the right to the timber but to all other forest products within the concession area.

Majority of these logging sites are located in remaining forests and critical watershed areas. Between 2001 and 2006, commercial loggers were allowed to increase their production by 81%. In contrast, the government was only able to reforest 294,625 hectares between 1997 and 2006. This does not come as a surprise since seventy-five percent (75%) of our forests is allocated for production and only 23% for conservation and protection.

Today, the Philippines has the smallest forest cover in Southeast Asia. Only 3% of the original forests remain. From 2000 to 2005, 157,400 hectares of forest or 1.98% of our forest were lost annually, making the country one with the highest deforestation rates in the world.

MARINE DEGRADATION AND POLLUTION

The Philippines is the center of marine biodiversity globally, yet also has also the most threatened marine hotspots. Only 4% of coral reefs remain in excellent condition while 97% are under serious threat. Less than 120,000 out of 500,000 hectares of mangrove areas remain.

Fish productivity is fast declining. A World Bank report (2005) estimates that if present trends in fish production continue, only 10 kilograms of fish will be available per Filipino per year by 2010, as opposed to 28.5 kilograms per year in 2003, affecting 62% of the population who lives in the coastal zone and those who depend on fish for food.

This can be attributed to overfishing by the big commercial fishers and the monopoly control of municipal fishing grounds by private and big businesses—a situation made possible by the Fisheries Code of 1998 and RA 8435 or the Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Act that encourages fish production for export.

Dirty and polluting industries were allowed to operate, aggravating marine degradation and pollution. The Arroyo administration indiscriminately gave out contracts to corporations with dismal environmental records such as Exxon Mobil, ranked by Global Fortune in 2010 as the biggest company in the world and one of the world's worst polluters. Exxon was awarded a service contract to explore and extract oil and natural gas in the Sulu Sea.

Arroyo's disregard for the marine environment in favor of polluting corporations are further demonstrated by not holding accountable the culprits of the 2006 Petron oil spill in Guimaras and the 2008 sinking of the MV Princess of the Stars off the coast of Romblon, which was carrying the highly-toxic pesticide endosulfan as cargo.

The Philippines is the center of marine biodiversity globally, yet also has also the most threatened marine hotspots.

TABLE 1. COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS ESTABLISHED DURING THE ARROYO REGIME			
Corporation	Classification	Year Commissioned	Power Capacity in Megawatts
APEC	New	2005	50
Mirant Pagbilao	Existing	2008	350
Mirant Toledo	New	2008	100
Coral Bay	New	2004	14.14
STEAG	New	2006	210
APEC	Existing	2010	50
Global Business Power	New	2010	164
DMCI	New	(2009)	29
Coral Bay	New	(2009)	15.92
Conal Holdings Inc/Alsons	New	(2011)	200
KEPCO Salcon	New	(2010)	200
DMCI	New	(2010)	100
Global Business Power	New	(2010)	246
Emerald Energy Corp	Existing	-	600
Source: Department of Energy			

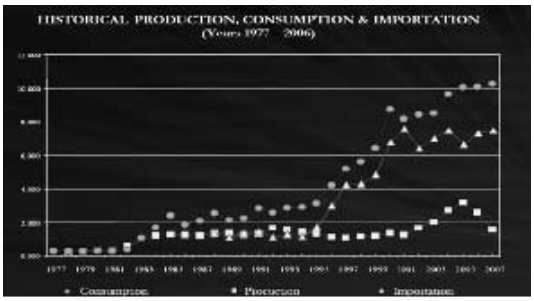


Figure 3. Historical production, consumption and importation of coal
Source: Department of Energy

In its Philippine Energy Plan, the government fully opens energy resources to exploration, exploitation, and plunder by foreign and private investors. Generous incentives, such as tax holidays and repatriation of profits, were provided. Policies such as RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 were implemented, and has resulted to higher power costs shouldered by the people.

The current energy program is also environmentally polluting and dirty. The Arroyo government has pushed for the establishment of more coal-fired power plants as seen in Table 1. Coal production, importation and consumption are continuously increasing every year, peaking in 2008 (see Figure 3). Based on 2005 data, 53% of the country's energy sources come from fossil fuels and coal which are identified as the major source of global carbon emissions.

While causes for disasters are natural, its impact is largely determined by government's ability and preparedness to respond to such calamities.

LACK OF GENUINE DISASTER-PREPAREDNESS MECHANISMS AND PROGRAMS

In 2009, the Philippines ranked second in the list of countries most affected by natural disasters. The International Panel on Climate Change identifies the Philippines as most vulnerable to strong weather disturbances and leads the list of nations most in danger of facing frequent and more intense storms.

Super typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng in October 2009 killed 929 people due to flooding and landslides. The National Disaster Coordinating Council estimated the total cost of damage from the two typhoons to reach Php38.301 billion with 70.9% of the total accounted for damages in agriculture and 29.1% in infrastructure.

While causes for disasters are natural, its impact is largely determined by government's ability and preparedness to respond to such calamities. The series of typhoons only showed how incompetent Arroyo's administration was in ensuring public safety exhibited through lack of infrastructures, equipment and mitigating programs to effectively deal with disasters.

Sheer incompetence and corporate motivations taking over public welfare was a recipe for disaster, such as the case of San Roque dam. During typhoon Pepeng, dam operators waited for the water to reach critical levels before suddenly opening the dam, flooding 90% of Pangasinan. The multi-purpose dam was built supposedly to also facilitate flood control, yet operators thought more of generating power and profits.

Following the floods, an El Nino episode struck the country during the first quarter of 2010. The dry spell has taken its toll mostly in the agriculture sector claiming 10.4 billion pesos total worth of damages, according NDCC. Although predicted as early as September last year, the government has again failed to prepare for its impacts.

PEDDLING OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS FOR AGROFUEL PRODUCTION

The sell-out of the country's agricultural lands for the production of sugarcane and coconut to supply bio-ethanol and coco-biodiesel to other countries was legitimized by the Arroyo administration when it the Biofuels Act of 2006 or RA 9367 into law.

By May 2007, one million hectares of agricultural land were committed for establishing jatropha plantations, when state-owned PNOC-Alternative Fuels Corp. signed a US$1.3 billion deal with British company NRG Chemical Engineering Pte.

Ibon Foundation reported that the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has identified 237,748 hectares of new sugar fields, mostly in Mindanao, that can be tapped to produce bio-ethanol. These are in Maguindanao (69,550 hectares), Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur (45,000 hectares), Palawan (20,808 hectares), Saranggani (19,700 hectares), Lanao del Norte (19,035 hectares), Cagayan (16,918 hectares), South Cotabato (15,000 hectares), Isabela (12,337 hectares), Masbate (8,000 hectares), Bohol (6,400 hectares), and Kalinga (5,000 hectares).

The policy on agrofuels compounds the centuries-old problem of landlessness, backward rural development, low agricultural productivity, and lack of genuine agrarian reform program. Massive land conversion of agricultural lands to agrofuel plantations will compromise the country's food security and increase dependence on imported agricultural products for domestic needs. Already, the Philippines is the largest importer of rice in the world, importing around 1.8 million tons of rice in 2008.

Land use conversion can be used by landlords to seek exemption under the current bogus agrarian reform program, evading the responsibility to distribute lands to farmers.

PRIVATIZATION AND POLLUTION OF FRESHWATER RESOURCES

While the Philippines is virtually surrounded by water, only three out of five Filipinos (66%) get their water for domestic consumption from formal sources and only 45% of irrigable farms are served by state and private irrigation systems. DENR lists the Philippines as having the second lowest annual per capita availability of freshwater in Asia.

A 2009 research by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) states only about 33% of river systems are still suitable as clean and safe sources of water, and up to 58% of the country's groundwater are now contaminated.

Water pollution by large corporations and extractive industries is essentially allowed under current laws. The Clean Water Act passed in 2004, gives more right to industries to pollute under the 'polluters pay' principle and through discharge permits. The Mining Act of 1995 also gives water rights to mining firms.

As a response to the water scarcity problem, the Arroyo administration has engaged in the privatization of freshwater sources. Most of our water resources such as rivers, springs, waterfalls and underground water are controlled and being used by big foreign and private corporations through their water permits.

The 2007 summary of water permits granted by the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) lists 19,695 grantees with a total volume of 60,164,70.752 liters per second (lps). The power sector uses 57% of the total volume granted to all the water permit holders, while other sectors such as irrigation (35%) and domestic (3%) receive much less. While the power sector gets the lion share, it only has 235 water permit grantees or just 1% of the total number of grantees. By contrast, irrigation has the biggest number of grantees at 10,329 (52%), followed by domestic at 6,447 (33%), industrial at 1,403, fisheries at 482, and commercial at 343.

KILLING AND LEGAL HARASSMENTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

Since Arroyo started her term in 2001, there are already 26 cases of extrajudicial killings, one (1) case of attempted murder, two (2) enforced disappearance and several lawsuits against environmental defenders nationwide as of March 2010. Many of the victims were active leaders of grassroots campaigns against large dams, commercial logging, and majority of which are anti- large-scale mining operations in their respective communities.

Among the first victims was Nicanor delos Santos, a Dumagat tribe leader and Secretary-General of Makbayan Samahan ng Katutubong Dumagat, an indigenous people's organization, was killed for protesting against the Laiban Dam project. In March 11, 2009, community leader Eliezer Billanes, was shot dead in a public market in Korondal City, Mindanao. He was the Chairperson of Alliance for Genuine Development in Mindanao that led opposition to the Tampakan Copper Gold Project in South Cotobato and a vocal critic of the Xstrata Sagittarius Mine, Inc. mining operations in their area.

Other anti-mining victims include:

The policy on agrofuels compounds the centuries-old problem of landlessness, backward rural development, low agricultural productivity, and lack of genuine agrarian reform program.

As long as Aquino will not rectify the previous administration's faults and fails to hold Arroyo accountable for these environmental crimes, the dirty legacy of the Arroyo administration continue to be a burden to deal with.

- Rev. Raul Domingo, clergy from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and an active critic of Rio Tuba Mining Corporation, killed in Puerto Princesa, Palawan on August 20, 2005;
- Rogelio Lagaro, a member of the Labugal tribal association and an active campaigner against the operations of mining corporation Tampacan Mineral Resources, Inc., killed in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on June 1, 2006 by suspected elements of the 25th IBPA;
- Cordillera Peoples' Alliance Elders Desk Coordinator and anti-mining activist Marcus Bangit, killed in San Isidro Echague, Isabela on June 8, 2006;
- Leodinio Monson, a Mandaya leader from the Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Boston (United Farmers of Boston), Davao Oriental, who was gunned down on April 29, 2009. He led his community's struggle against encroachments on their ancestral domain against large-scale mining activities of Australian-owned Omega Gold Mining Company.

Militarization is also rampant in mining communities. In February 2008, Arroyo created the investment defense force (IDF), which mobilized the military and police to secure mining, agricultural plantations, power facilities and other infrastructure against attacks by revolutionary groups in the country. One such case is the establishment of the Integrated Tribal Defense System, such as the Task Force Gantangan, which are used by the government and foreign TNCs to harass and contain indigenous peoples' opposition to their projects and operations in Mindanao.

There is also the prevalence of lawsuits against citizens and environmental interest groups. More environmental defenders are being subjected to forms of legal harassment through Strategic Legal Actions Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). SLAPPs affect public participation by limiting freedom of speech as well as the right to seek redress of grievances.

SIGNING THE JPEPA AND OTHER ODIOUS AGREEMENTS

In September 2006, Arroyo signed the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), a bilateral trade agreement with grave implications for the Philippine's environmentally-critical as well as economic sectors.

JPEPA legalized foreign waste dumping in Philippine soil through its provisions on the import and export of hazardous and toxic waste products. This violates the country's laws and commitments to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

JPEPA will also facilitate the fast depletion and exploitation of our marine resources by more sophisticated Japanese commercial fishing vessels. Article 28 Section 3 stipulates that the Philippine government will allow 8,000-ton commercial fishing vessels from Japan to explore the country's marine resources and fish.

Another questionable term in the JPEPA are its trade provisions, particularly the liberalization of trade in goods, which will only yield dubious economic gains for the Filipino people and even lead to economic plunder. Japan is a highly industrialized country while the Philippines is an agricultural and pre-industrial country. Filipino firms producing the same goods as Japanese manufacturers would find it even harder to compete under JPEPA.

The agreement is an assault on our national sovereignty, patrimony, and environmental protection. JPEPA will further open up our lands and waters to more wanton and aggressive extraction by Japanese firms and set a precedent for other bilateral agreements with other countries.

CONCLUSION

Nine years of Arroyo spelled crisis in every facet of Philippine ecology and society. Environmental problems being reflections of social and economic inequalities maintained by status quo and its agents are deeply intertwined with poverty, hunger, unemployment and landlessness, among other problems.

Instead of resolving these issues the Arroyo administration has caused more devastation, depletion, and pollution of the environment through flawed economic policies serving foreign interests, rampant corruption, chronic neglect and lax implementation.

The challenge for the new Aquino administration is to veer away from this path. It should immediately reverse disadvantageous policies and programs and initiate the review and cancellation of projects and contracts that have already caused so much ecological destruction. It should not excuse itself for not being able to do anything because its predecessor left with such a huge mess. As long as Aquino will not rectify the previous administration's faults and fails to hold Arroyo accountable for these environmental crimes, the dirty legacy of the Arroyo administration continue to be a burden to deal with.

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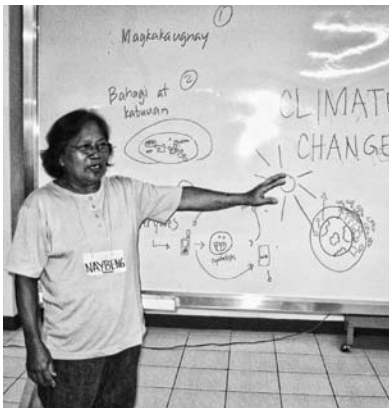
ENVICORE: PILOTING A NEW COURSE FOR GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL CADRES

LISA ITO

The Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines developed and piloted a new course for environmental educators, campaigners, and workers. Entitled the Environmental Cadres Course (EnviCore), the training stressed the value of the environment as a cross-cutting concern among basic social sectors and aimed to deal with problems encountered by people's organizations on the ground. This article documents the story of how it all began.



Top: Graduates of CEC's first pilot EnviCore training raise their fist in solidarity for the environment.

Bottom: A participant from Amihan rural women's organization shares her thoughts on global warming.

ROOTED IN RENEW

Since its inception in 1989, one of CEC's core programs has been the provision of relevant and responsive environmental education and training for Philippine grassroots communities and people's organizations. This thrust led to the conceptualization and piloting of the Restoration Ecology Workshop (RENEW) in 1989 among different social sectors, including peasants, indigenous peoples, workers, women, fisherfolk, and urban poor folk.

RENEW started as a basic training module on restoration ecology. After periodic assessments and a process of "progressive contextualization" by the Center's pool of trainers, it evolved into a dynamic and flexible course which introduces basic frameworks of analysis for environmental concerns, relevant environmental science concepts, linkages between local, national and global issues, and action planning. It remains CEC's basic environmental education course up to the present.

Among the main ideas introduced by EnviCore was the concept of "environmental cadres." Defining this concept proved to be the more challenging aspects of conceptualizing the curriculum.

CREATING ENVICORE

EnviCore was conceptualized as a second-level or a follow-up course for RENEW graduates and environmental workers—a step further towards equipping campaigners and educators with more precise knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to engage in environmental education, research, and advocacy work.

A curriculum development workshop was held by CEC staff in March 2010 in order to conceptualize the course objectives, program, and content. As a more intensive course, EnviCore aimed to develop the capacity of environmental cadres of CEC network partners to respond to arising environmental issues and problems.

DEVELOPING "GREEN CADRES"

Among the main ideas introduced by EnviCore was the concept of "environmental cadres." Defining this concept proved to be the more challenging aspects of conceptualizing the curriculum. Should this be a training course for environmental educators? Facilitators? Campaigners? Technical staff?

The composition of potential participants for the course was considered. Some were environmental NGOs. Some were sectoral institutions, representing a specific constituency such as farmers. Some were regional alliances or networks, whose members were composed of a broad base among the people. But all were engaged in multitasking between education and training, campaign, projects, research and advocacy work on differing, but overlapping levels.

Delimiting this characterization of target participants was a crucial concept, since this would be setting the expectations from the training graduates and the reality of the tasks that they fulfilled on the ground. *Environmental cadres* seemed to be the precise term which could capture the scope of the tasks and mandates of CEC's partners and constituency. From the discussions, environmental cadres were perceived to be people belonging to people's organizations, who have a high level of commitment to and practice in environmental struggles, a holistic grasp of basic environmental concepts and concerns, and capacity to educate, organize, and lead their respective constituents. Thus, they take on various roles and competencies as facilitators of change: leadership and advocacy, skills in education, training and information dissemination work, skills in networking, solid grasp of organizing and campaign work, and a facility to oversee researches.

PILOTING THE FIRST BATCH

After months of preparation, the first EnviCore training was piloted at the staff and national level from 29 June to 4 July, 2010 at the Religious of the Good Shepherd (RGS) training center in Tagaytay City. Target participants for the pilot batch included CEC staff, national sectoral organizations, and members of CEC partner organizations who have previously completed RENEW courses.

The course produced 16 graduates from among CEC staff and nine national sectors: women, urban poor, workers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, and youth. Participants included representatives from the rural womens federation Amihan, the Center for Womens Resources, Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, urban poor organization Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (KPNE), Kabataan Sectoral Partylist, indigenous peoples federation Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas, Katribu Partylist, and national fisherfolk federation Pamalakaya. Most were working with these organizations as education and training officers, campaigners, community organizers, or writer-researchers.

The multi-sectoral composition of the pilot batch of participants and their diversity in terms of organizational background, age, gender, and interests highlighted the awareness of how environmental issues are connected across and within sectors.

For most of the participants from sectoral organizations, it was first time to undergo a formal training in environmental work. It was also an opportunity to broaden and deepen their understanding of the links between environmental issues and their respective concerns—which ranged from labor union education, education work among urban poor communities, gender education, indigenous people's campaigns, and involvement of students and youth in ecological concerns.

During the sharing of experiences facilitated by Che Dominguez, one realization was that there were many sectoral issues and campaigns on the ground that were directly linked to ecological concerns, such as offshore mining, the pollution of Manila Bay and Laguna Lake, waste mismanagement, impacts of pesticide use, oil spills, continuing foreign control over Philippine resources, and the devastation of urban and rural poor communities due to calamities (typhoons) or development projects (dams and large-scale

mining). Responses to these realities ranged from direct action and services (such as distribution of relief goods and clean-up drives), information-dissemination and propaganda work, education and campaign activities, and legislative advocacy.

INTENSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE

The six-day training included various inputs aiming to introduce and enhance basic compentencies of environmental cadres.

The primary component of EnviCore laid stress on analytical frameworks for practice. KPNE National Coordinator Clemente Bautista, Jr. set the general situational context with inputs on the current state and challenges facing the Philippine and global environmental movements, laying stress on the state of crisis facing the people. Philippine Climate Watch Alliance spokesperson Meggie Nolasco followed up this segment with a discussion on climate change. CEC Executive Director Frances Quimpo gave a discussion of the frameworks and principles of CEC's environmental work. Lastly, CEC board member and Agham chairperson Dr. Giovanni Tapang gave the round up discussion of frameworks for analyzing environmental and scientific issues.

The second part of EnviCore focused on enhancing the participants knowledge of relevant scientific and legal aspects to environmental work. CEC Training and Community Services Coordinator Ric Saturay led the review of basic ecological concepts and processes. Dr. Emerlinda Regis, head of Ateneo de Naga University's Institute for Environmental Conservation and Research, also talked about her experiences in environmental assessment and monitoring methods. Atty. Tonette Ramos of the Legal Resources Center gave an input on the general framework of environmental laws, led the special discussion on the Environmental Impact Statement law and Republic Act 7942 (the Philippine Mining Act of 1995), and gave an update on the rules of court related to environmental legislation and the green courts.

The last component of the EnviCore training focused on enhancing competencies and skills for practice and sharing experienes related to these.

A large part of this involved the gathering of data. Atty. Ramos led the workshop on gathering and documenting evidences for environmental cases. CEC Research, Education, and Advocacy Coordinator Lisa Ito-Tapang facilitated the session on tools in issue analysis and documentation, research, and profiling. Former CEC Executive Director Allan Mesina shared the Center's experiences in conducting environmental investigative missions (EIM) and maximizing these as opportunities for advocacy work, laying stress on EIMs as a tool where scientists and experts to respond to the concrete realities of grassroots communities in environmentally-critical areas.

Another aspect was the focus on campaign and networking to achieve results. Bautista facilitated the session on environmental campaign planning and administration while CEC board member and veteran development worker Josephine Dongail capped the period with a session on networking and resource mobilization for environmental campaigns.

The pilot batch of participants drafted individual one-year forward plans with their organizations, where learnings from EnviCore could be integrated into actual practice.

STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND PEOPLES MOVEMENT

Though this is still an ongoing journey and experiment, the results and feedback from the pilot EnviCore training graduates affirmed the need for strengthening the links and collaborations between environmental organizations and organizations representing the basic social sectors of Philippine society. It highlighted the need to develop awareness and competencies not just in the people from within environmental organizations, but from sectoral organizations whose constituencies are the first to be affected by ecological disasters and problems. A second EnviCore training will be held for Luzon-based organizations this year, while the training will be piloted in Visayas and Mindanao in 2011.

As all birthings go, this EnviCore training had its share of labor pains and experiments. But the diversity of the participants, their willingness to expand their comfort zones of learning, and the ecological values shared by the nuns of RGS Compound, and reflected in the training center's policies and atmosphere, also contributed to creating this space of learning.

In closing, the EnviCore hopes to contributing an emerging batch of Philippine environmental cadres who can effectively educate more learners from the grassroots and help emancipate more communities, who can bring more people to realize that the struggle for the environment is the struggle for the people.

EnviCore hopes to contributing an emerging batch of Philippine environmental cadres who can effectively educate more learners from the grassroots and help emancipate more communities

Top: Musician Popong Landero strums a tune during the song writing workshop.

Middle: Lunhaw Vargas of Lanao del Sur tries out her first composition.

Bottom: Neil Cervantes of Davao del Norte performs during the soft launch at Matina Town Square.

MUSIC FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN MINDANAO

Art is a compelling tool for changing consciousness and fostering dialogue. The power of songs for advancing environmental education and advocacy has been repeatedly demonstrated in different venues and times.

A regional environmental songwriting workshop was held last June 4 to 8 in Davao City and organized by the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines, Panalipdan-Southern Mindanao Region, and local cultural network Tugtugang Bayan with the support of Development and Peace.

The workshop is part of an ongoing project by CEC to support the production of environmental songs by young composers from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The Luzon workshop was held in Quezon City last 2008 and resulted in the production of the CD album entitled *Rapu-Rapu*. The Visayas workshop was held in Iloilo in 2009 and yielded the album entitled *Ili-ili sa Kalibutan*.

The workshop gathered thirteen participants from Davao, Kidapawan, Iligan, Sarangani, North Cotabato, Tagum, Lanao del Sur, and Cagayan de Oro cities in Mindanao. Most are from organizations representing cultural workers, indigenous peoples, and youth.

The workshop started with inputs on the context. May Vargas of Panalipdan SMR opened the workshop with an introduction to the regional environmental situation. Lisa Ito of CEC's Research, Education, and Advocacy program gave a situationer on the state of the Philippine environment.

The workshop was facilitated by Davao-based folk reggae musician Popong Landero. Landero provided the inputs on Filipino music and introduction to basic songwriting and composition processes. Landero also facilitated the composition and arrangement workshops and mentored the young composers throughout the entire process of conceptualizing and composing their songs.

Songs produced by the group stressed issues such as large-scale mining, dam construction, privatization of water services, justice and peace, the urgency of environmental defense, and development aggression. These were later on launched in Matina Town Square, Davao City.

Top: Collecting soil sampling at the Dalul river.

TAMPAKAN MINING PROJECT: PRELUDE TO A DISASTER?

ROG AMON

The Center for Environmental Concerns spearheaded an environmental investigative mission (EIM) on the Xtstrata-SMI mining operations in Davao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat to get a first hand assessment of the initial and potential impacts of the Tampakan Copper-Gold Mining Project of foreign transnational corporation Xstrata and Philippine-based affiliate Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI). The EIM was held from August 26 to 28, 2010 and capped by a press conference held in Digos City on August 28, 2010.

The EIM is a participatory research approach to understanding environmental issues affecting communities. The mission, composed of a multidisciplinary team from Manila, Davao and General Santos, and two volunteer students from Japan and China, aimed to determine present and future impacts of the large-scale mining project on the communities and the environment, particularly in the municipalities of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat (where part of the open pit area would be located) and Malalag, Davao del Sur where the port, filter and power plant facilities are to be constructed.

The EIM was launched in cooperation with Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas, ICON-SP, SocCSkSarGenDs-AGENDA (Alliance for Genuine Development Inc.), Social Action-Diocese of Marbel, Tampakan Parish, Columbio Multi-Sectoral Ecology Movement (CMEM), Columbio Parish, Tingog ug Gugma Alang sa Kinaiyahan, Save Taplan River Movement, Panalipdan Youth, Save Malaglag Bay Movement, and MASIPAG.

The EIM is a participatory research approach to understanding environmental issues affecting communities.

THE TAMPAKAN FTAA AND THE PHILIPPINE MINING ACT OF 1995

Eighteen years have passed since giant mining companies explored the quadri-boundaries of SoCSKSARGENDS in 1992, while fifteen years have passed since the Republic Act 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 was enacted into law. Surprisingly, Western Mining Corporation had acquired the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) for , a type of

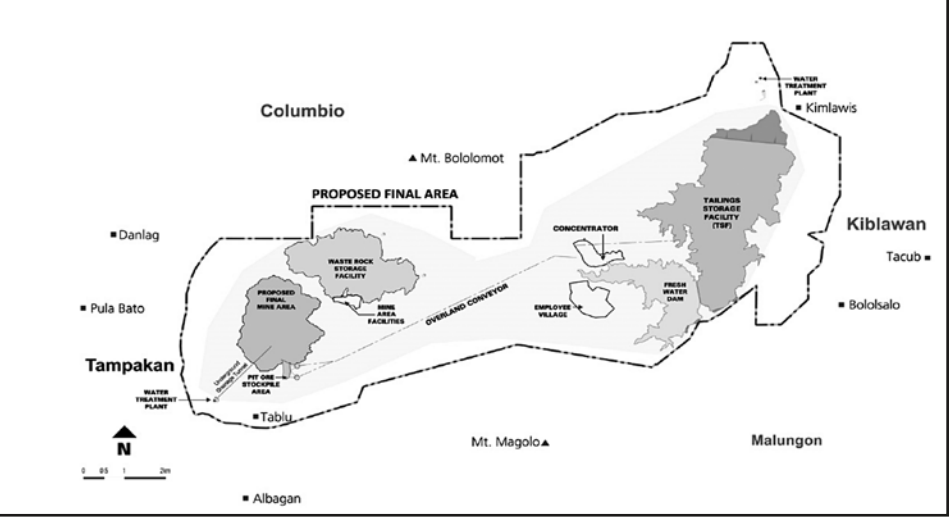


Figure 1. The proposed mine layout of the Tampakan copper-gold project

mineral concession, for Tampakan prior to the implementation of RA 7942. An FTAA allows 100% foreign ownership and capital investment of mining projects and incentives and auxilliary rights, such as the right to timber and water in their concession areas.

CMEM says that the granting of FTAA to WMC by the government and the rapid transfer of mining rights to different mining companies to the present SMI-XSTRATA grossly violated and sold out the rights of the people, especially the indigenous peoples and their ancestral domains.

In February 1997, the La Bugal organization of Columbio, Sultan Kurat, challenged the constitutionality of RA 7942. After seven years, in 2004, the Supreme Court (SC) ruled favoring the petitioners. However, the same year, the SC reversed its decision due with the intervention and influence of then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, a known proponent of mining liberalization and the author of RA 7942.

XSTRATA-SMI'S TAMPAKAN MINING PROJECT

The Tampakan project is a 2.4 billion metric ton deposit with 13.5 million metric tons of copper and 15.8 million ounces of gold at a 0.3% cut-off grade. It ranks as the fifth largest known undeveloped copper-gold deposit worldwide and is expected to be the largest single foreign investment in the Philippines at around $5.2 billion. Additional investments are expected once the project commences commercial production from 2015 to 2033.

From company reports, SMI said that the project has the potential to become an economic driver for Mindanao, projecting a contribution of at $37 billion to the Philippine economy over the life of the mine (first 17 years) at an average contribution of one percent to gross domestic product yearly.

However, still to be fully determined is the entire range of ecological, socio-economic, and cultural impacts of the Tampakan concession, one of the biggest mining projects to be conducted on Philippine soil. The EIM hopes to contribute to building a more complete scenario of the full impacts of the mining operations.

SALIENT FINDINGS OF THE EIM

Below are the EIM's major findings, based on the EIM team's interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and field visits. FGDs were conducted with the sectors vulnerable to the impacts of mining operations in Columbio municipality: peasants, irrigators, fisherfolk, women, residents and indigenous peoples, particularly the B'laan tribe. Interviews were also conducted with some key local officials.

- FAULT LINES IN TAMPAKAN POSE RISKS TO THE STABILITY OF THE MINE

The proposed mining site is traversed by numerous fault lines particularly where the tailings pond is planned to be located. A geological survey of the area reveals that Mindanao Island is traversed by the Philippine Fault and the Cotabato Fault. The deposit lies within the Cotabato Fault Zone, a west-northwest trending strike slip fault zone. The tailings pond that is to be constructed in Kiblawan lies on an area cut by a strike slip fault. This poses a big risk to the stability of the pond that will be built.

Figure 1 shows the proposed layout of the Tampakan project. The tailings pond is a reservoir used to store tailings, slurry of spent ore, contaminated with high amounts of heavy metals such as mercury, arsenic and copper and other toxic elements. If the dam fails, there is a high risk that heavy metals and toxic elements will flow to the Mal River which supports the agricultural and domestic needs of the people in Malalag, Hagonoy and Kiblawan in Davao del Sur.

Maps indicate that the area traversing through the proposed mine site is cut with numerous faults. The point where the tailings pond will be located is cut by a strike slip fault. This poses a big risk to the stability of the pond that will be built.

THREAT TO FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture is the dominant economic activity in Davao del Sur and Columbio. Various phases of open-pit mining would create massive disturbance to the environmental ecosystem. Failure of the tailings dam is projected to severely damage watershed and irrigation infrastructures that support Mindanao's food basket.

The construction of a coal-fired power plant to supply the mine's electrical needs in Malalag Bay, Davao del Sur endangers fish productivity and the bay's health. Malalag Bay is a rich area for coastal

biodiversity, where a fish sanctuary has been set up by the local government. Most coastal communities in Davao del Sur also depend on these fishing grounds for food and livelihood. The government's approval of the power plant is thus a risk to the aquaculture and fishing activities in Malalag Bay.

DUBIOUS PROMISE OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

Xstrata-SMI is wafting a sweet promise of development in communities thirsting for economic support from the government and even basic social services. The company boasts of creating 9,000 jobs in host communities.

But SocCSkSarGenDs-AGENDA stated that close to 40,000 people (mostly farmers, fishermen, and indigenous people) will lose their source of livelihood to large-scale mining. "The 9,000 contractual or seasonal jobs promised are nothing compared to the irreversible loss of our resources, the degradation of the environment and the tampering of our patrimony; as well as the health hazards for the workers and local residents who have to contend with the dirtiest industry in the world," the group said in a statement.

Precedents of dubious economic gains have already been noted in other large-scale mining areas. Arturo C. Boquiren, an economics professor of UP Baguio who has conducted studies on mining-affected communities in Benguet where mining has persisted for close to 100 years, observed that "poverty rates are higher in mining communities and local government units hosting corporate mining do not earn incomes significantly higher than municipalities who do not host mining."

MILITARIZATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

According to SOCCSKSARGENDS Agenda, among the most militarized areas in south central Mindanao today are the communities within and surrounding the mining site of Xstrata-SMI-Hillcrest On the pretext of "clearing the areas of subversive elements", the Philippine Armed Forces, particularly the 27th IB, the 39th IB, Task Force Kitaco and the CAFGUs have continuously launched a military campaign of terror and harassment on civilians, mostly members of the B'laan tribe.

On March 9, 2009, Eliezer Billanes, SOCCSKSARGENDS Agenda chairperson and known as a staunch critic of Xstrata-SMI Mining, was gunned down in the Koronadal City, about 50 meters from a police station. Felix Espanola, who served as deputy chairman of Agenda, was forced to go into hiding after receiving death threats similar to what Billanes received before he was killed.

Above: Conducting key informant interviews with indigenous leaders in Columbio municipality.

DISPLACEMENT OF IP COMMUNITIES

Thousands of IPs stand to be displaced from their ancestral lands. Several B'laan communities have already been eased out. From the company's active campaign for the entry of the mines, the B'laan were told that their communities would not be negatively affected by mine operations. On the other hand, the company promised to provide scholarships and livelihood programs.

Residents admitted that as long as their ancestral lands would not be affected, they are willing to support the mining company as it provides incentives that the communities need. However, such offers on the part of the company and their failure to disclose the possible negative impacts and other information about their operation violate the principles of the Free, Informed and Prior Consent

Currently, SMI-Xstrata, is aggressively completing its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), a critical requirement before they can acquire the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC). As stated by the acting director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, the entry of a Filipino company, San Miguel Corporation (SMC), in the Tampakan project will appease the dissent against the project.

Glaring poverty, backward agriculture and degraded lands would be further aggravated once mining operations commence. The Tampakan project will not be the solution to the underdevelopment and poverty of the affected areas. It will in fact worsen the degradation of the environment and communities as proven by the experiences of other mining areas in the country.

FRIENDSHIP AND KNOWING: WHAT I LEARNED IN THE PHILIPPINES

Reflection from CEC's volunteer interns from the Development Traineeship Program of AIESEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales)

RYU KOIDE

Why does poverty exist? How do environmental issues become so severe? It is difficult to isolate a single cause. Is it due to globalization? Local government? Apathy among people? Are the impoverished themselves responsible?

To answer these questions, I have studied environmental engineering and development studies in both Japan and the UK. I also have joined an environmental youth group but I could not find a satisfactory answer. After these experiences, I decided to go to the Philippines to get involved in the front line of environmental issues and poverty.

In my country, Japan, most people are aware of importance of environmental issues due to serious industrial pollution incidents in the 1950's to 70's – Minamata disease, Itaiitai disease and Yokkaichi asthma, to name the most infamous. Phrases such as "save the earth" and "ecology" are frequently seen in advertising and the mass media. To me, these seem to be abstract slogans that are quite detached from the people and land suffering from environmental disasters.

I understand now, that the first step to make a better world is to learn and inform

In addition, some international environmental convention began to take on the aspect of North and South opposition. The COP 15 (Conference on the Parties) on Climate Change could not reach an effective conclusion due to disagreement between developing nations and industrialised nations. COP 10 on Biological Diversity targets an agreement of ABS (Access to genetic resources and Benefit-Sharing), which is the dominating issue regarding trade between 'South' countries exporting biological resources and 'North' countries importing them. I believe that nowadays, environmental issues cannot be solved without properly addressing poverty.

The famous Kuznets Curve, a graphical representation of Kuznet's environmental theory, shows environmental pollution will become most intensive during the development stage of a society. In other words, environmental stress is most serious among countries in the process of development, while it has not yet occurred in the least developed countries and is solved in developed countries. Most of environmental pollution happens when we extract and process natural resources through activities such as mining, smelting, and heavy chemicals industries. However my country, Japan, imports much of its industrial resources from other countries. Japanese companies are also transferring their production facilities to other Asian nations, such as China and South East Asia - including the Philippines. That was why I came to the Philippines; to see the actual situation firsthand.

The Philippines was a beautiful and amazing place. In my spare time during the internship, I had opportunities to enjoy the great nature of the Philippines islands. It was an unforgettable experience to see, for the first time, coral reefs, mangroves, crocodiles and a underground cave with numerous bats. The Filipino people are also friendly and helpful. It was a little bit difficult to adapt to a new lifestyle in a country so far from my homeland, but I have been helped by the genuine kindness and smiles of the Filipino people.

Despite this, what I saw in the country was a serious situation. I have visited lots of places suffering from environmental issues and poverty, such as the Payatas dumping site with impoverished recycling workers in an unhealthy environment, Rapu-rapu island suffering from a collapse of its mine tailings dam, and Mindanao island with native people struggling to adapt to a wave of modernization after recent mining projects.

At one point, I actually found myself losing hope. I could not find a solution and could not muster a passion to work anymore. The ones who gave me hope were the Filipino people. The CEC staffs are working with the issues bravely by going to deep forests and isolated islands to help the most vulnerable people. The impoverished people themselves are also tough and strong-minded, driven by a sincere hope and optimism.

I have learned two important things from my internship with CEC. One is friendship. I do not

(continued on page 24)

TIME IN THE PHILIPPINES

RONG SUN

At first, I preferred CEC as my work place just because I wanted to do something about the environment, which is close to my major. When I came back to China, I realized that all my most wonderful memories about my life in Philippines were somehow related to CEC: the amazing days in Rapu-Rapu island, the investigation in Digos City, the four days I lived in a Church, and so on.

Above: The authors join CEC's environmental investigative mission to the Tampakan Mining Project. Here, they join the technical team to conduct a river characterization activity along Mainit river.

THE WORK I DID

If someone asked me to express my work there in only a few words, I would choose: *research*, *internet*, *field investigation* and *feeling*.

I worked with Rog, Chimi, Lisa and Ryu on research related to the environmental investigative missions in Tampakan and Cagayan Valley. Before we went to Mindanao for the investigation, we mostly did desk and internet research. This work seems boring but you can learn a lot. At first, I was not very adapted to plenty of English articles, and had to read them until 12 p.m. in my room, but things got better soon.

At the end of August, we went to Mindanao for the field visit, which we had prepared for a long time. We met our local friends there and lived in the church in Digos City. We had lots of work to do so the schedule for us was so hurried. But I really enjoyed it. We talked with the Bishop, the local famers, and the local government officers, to know their attitude about the mining activities and express our opinions. Everything was new for me except getting the soil and sediment samples. Finally, we held a very successful press conference!

The thing I cannot ignore is the experience in Rapu-Rapu island as a CEC staff, during a study tour by the Canadian Development and Peace organization. It was really special for me to be one of the hosts in the foreign county. We got more chances to get close to the local people. We had to get up early, but it was so amazing: walking along the road near the pure beach in the forest, hearing the sound of waves, helping people prepare the breakfast for our visitors, playing with the kids and so on.

THE THINGS I FELT

To tell the truth, I was really touched by the people after I went back to Manila from Digos City. I was always thinking about what the motivation for people chose to work in NGOs was.

After I talked and worked with these people, I found that what they really choose is not a job, but a lifestyle. They choose a free working environment, with no strained personal relationship with colleagues. They choose to focus on the issues they really care about. They choose to work with a group of people sharing the same ambitions and purposes. It is the happy feelings when we are working together and focusing on our issues that make us feel that the things we have done can really make sense. We can feel the truth and beauty from people's heart!

Sitting behind my desk, and checking the photos I took in Philippines, everything seems like a dream. The 44 days I spent in the Philippines, the six weeks in CEC, opened a door for me to a new world and my dream. Next time, if my friends come to ask how the Philippines is, I will tell them: *Do you want to know what it really is like there? Don't just travel there, find an NGO and work there!*

Finally, I want to thank all the people in CEC. Sorry that I cannot get in touch with you because of my heavy course load here, but I really miss you all! Hopefully, someday I can go back and work with you again.

The 44 days I spent in the Philippines, the six weeks in CEC, opened a door for me to a new world and my dream.

Joan Hinton visits the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima) for the first time on Aug. 5, 2008. (Photo and caption from the Mainichi Daily News)

JOAN HINTON: PEOPLE'S SCIENTIST

DR. GIOVANNI TAPANG

On August 6 and 9, 1945, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by the first atomic bombs used in warfare, by the United States. In commemoration of these two great human rights and ecological disasters, we are sharing the story of a scientist who witnessed the worst and the best of what science and technology can offer to the people: the story of the late Joan Hinton (20 October 1921 – 8 June 2010).

She lived in a dairy farm near the Chinese capital: an American who worked for the Manhattan Project - an elite team of scientists and nuclear physicists in the 1940s gathered by the United States government in Los Alamos, New Mexico for the development of the first atomic bomb. She was one of the few women involved in the project and had worked on water boiler reactors as a graduate student of Enrico Fermi in Chicago.

Are we scientists going to spend our lives in slavery for madmen who want to destroy the world?...Can we not vision the world of tomorrow?

I never met her, but she made a lasting impression on me. Being a physicist myself, there was an immediate shared experience of learning physics and her dedication. The best glimpse I had of her life was through a book—*Silage Choppers and Snake Spirits*—which Ibon Foundation has published a year ago.

She witnessed the first test of a nuclear weapon in 1945 at White Sands near Alamogordo, New Mexico. In describing the Trinity test, Hinton said that seeing a bomb similar to what was dropped at Nagasaki "was like being at the bottom of an ocean of light" with a cloud that was "dark and red at the bottom and daylight at the top." The US attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few weeks after shocked and angered Hinton, causing her to leave the project. Knowing well the widespread destruction and effects on the people in the two cities, she campaigned in Washington to internationalize nuclear power and warn against the dangers of nuclear weapons.

"Are we scientists going to spend our lives in slavery for madmen who want to destroy the world?... Can we not vision the world of tomorrow? Will it be a world of destruction and misery, agonizing death by radiation or will it be a world where mountains are moved by atomic bombs to change the course of rivers and make rich green land out of deserts? Where is our imagination?," she said later of her decision.

In an interview with Catherine Makino of IPS Tokyo, Hinton likened her experience to building a bike. "I realised there was no such thing as pure physics," she said, "It was like building a bike. Anybody can ride it, but you have to know where you are going." After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Joan Hinton definitely knew where she was going.

She was no stranger to being excellent and progressive. Born in 1921, she was at an early age very determined to become a scientist. Her mother was a progressive educator and founder

of The Putney School in Vermont. Her great-grandfather was the mathematician George Boole, regarded as the founder of the field of computer science and the inventor of Boolean logic—the basis of modern digital computer processing. Jean, her sister, was a civil rights and peace activist and her brother, William, witnessed the Chinese people's revolution, dutifully recording the land reform process of that time. He later released this book as Fanshen.

The hues that Joan Hinton saw at Trinity presaged the colors she would embrace when she went to China in 1948, during the Chinese Revolution. With Sid Engst, an American agriculturist, she went to China in 1945 and joined the Chinese people in their struggle. Witnessing the transformation of China in 1949, as Beijing was liberated by the Communists under Mao Zedong, the physicist contributed her talents to improving agricultural machinery and dairy production in a commune.

Asked why she decided to go to China, Hinton said that she wanted to "find out how the Chinese communists defeated Japan and the Chinese Nationalists—who were supported by the US—when all they had was millet and rifles." They were caught up in the social transformation of what was then a backward agrarian country into a socialized industrial powerhouse. In the same year of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the couple married in a mountainous Chinese village.

Their immersion did not end there. After 1949, she worked in a tiny commune in the countryside near Inner Mongolia and Xian farm in northwest China. She did not work in atomic physics as news reports in the US during the Cold War portrayed her to be doing. Instead, she delved in cattle semen and embryos in liquid nitrogen to improve animal husbandry on her collective's dairy farm. She also later improved on a continuous flow automatic milk pasteurizer.

With the determination and skill as she worked as a physicist, Joan Hinton worked on agricultural machinery to help people have a better life. With problems as difficult as working on the bomb, she solved problems on a state-owned farm on the outskirts north of Beijing. She designed better milking parlors, using computers to monitor cows and did research on cattle reproduction. From the 1950s to the 1970s, she helped to develop production of corn and the raising of cattle as well as other agricultural products in her area.

The Hintons forsook special status as "foreign experts" and sought to have the same living standard as their local counterparts without any special distinctions. Hinton also was active politically and joined discussions that were relevant to China's growth and the direction of its development. Later she worked with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Mechanization Sciences in 1979.

Using her science for the people's benefit, she used local resources to develop simple tools and more complicated machinery, learning as one should along the way. She also extolled the virtue of mobilizing people to achieve a goal, with the power of "the hands of the people", where everyone can achieve full potential under such socialized circumstances where no one exploits the other.

Called Han Chun by the Chinese, her story is of an individual who left her promising background for a more promising future of building a society that benefits the many. She witnessed the transformation of China from a semi-feudal nation, through its program of land reform and subsequent industrial expansion, to become a nation at par with other industrialized countries. She was witness to the Cultural Revolution, the death of Mao and the subsequent rise to power of Deng Xiao Ping. Hinton got her wish to see how peasants, starting with millet and rifles, transformed their country through socialism. She also saw how this development was hijacked by a few leaders who reversed the course of China's development. In later years, as China embraced capitalism, they "have watched their socialist dream fall apart" as "the difference between the poor and the rich. . . is growing."

Joan visited the Philippines with William (Bill) in 1996 as a fellow progressive. She joined the activities against the APEC summit then participating in the People's Campaign Against Imperialist Globalization and the People's Caravan against the APEC summit. In turn, she developed friendships and continued communications with progressive and democratic groups in the Philippines. Through the Internet, she kept up with the different issues around the world and still took time to write articles against war even during her eighties.

Remembering Han Chun—Joan Hinton—is best done by emulating her examples. She once wrote in a letter in the 1960s that "it's the struggles of the people, not weapons, which in the end determine the outcome of history". That is a fitting quote from a woman, a scientist and an internationalist devoted to improving not just the Chinese people's future but the rest of humanity through her practice of making science serve the people.

Dr. Giovanni Tapang is a physicist and the Chairperson of Agham (Scientists, Engineers and Technologists for the People). He is a board member of the Center for Environmental Concerns.

It's the struggles of the people, not weapons, which in the end determine the outcome of history

FISHERFOLKS ACROSS REGIONS GATHER IN NATIONAL CONFERENCE, UNITE TO JUNK FISHERIES CODE OF 1998

CHEAMSON BOONGALING

"The 12-year implementation of the Fisheries Code worsened the daily plight of small fishers regarding backward production and equipment, high costs of inputs, low share in fish catch, underpricing, and subsequent policies, programs and ordinances of the government that kills the livelihood of 1.8 million fisher folks in the country and 8 million Filipinos directly relying on the fisheries sector."

The call for an alternative fisheries law that will genuinely address the woes of the poorest sector in our society has now gained ground and is gathering strength from the mass movement.

This was Anakpawis Partylist Rep. Rafael Mariano's statement affirmed by fisherfolk leaders and representatives from different regions gathered during the National Fisherfolk Conference on the Fisheries Code of 1998 and Marine Resources held June 11, 2010.

Organized by the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines and Pambansang Lakas ng Mamalakaya sa Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), the conference aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment on the current fisheries law, document its impacts on the fisheries sector, and develop recommendations, actions and alternatives for policy and mass campaigns.

Inputs from Pamalakaya national leaders, experts in inland and marine fisheries from the academe, and other environment resource persons, as well as legislative responses from partylist groups Bayan Muna, Gabriela, and Anakpawis were delivered during the morning session. Consultation workshops held in the afternoon were actively participated by fisherfolks from Rizal, Laguna, Batangas in Southern Tagalog, La Union, Masbate, Bicol Region, Cebu, Iloilo and Bohol in Central Visayas, Eastern Samar and Saranggani in Mindanao.

Among the salient issues tackled is the continuous shrinking of fishing waters for small fishers because of the establishment of fish sanctuaries and issuance of Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLA). Under the law, local governments can designate 15% of their fishing area as fish sanctuary. In reality, the area is used as diving sites and resorts for eco-tourism. Meanwhile, public lands and waters are being leased for the establishment of huge fish ponds and cages. Of these, individuals are allowed to lease 50 hectares, while corporations for 250 hectares in the period of 25 years renewable for another 25 years.

Also raised was the problem of the illegal entry of large commercial fishing vessels within the 15 km municipal fishing water reserved for marginal fisher folks. The Fisheries Code allows entry from 10.1 km to 15 km as long as it reaches 7 fathom deep, a provision gravely abused by commercial fishers.

Zoning ordinances and color coding schemes for small boats directly limit the catch of small fishers. While policies on regressive taxation, fees, and sky high penalties for violations aggravates the conditions of ordinary fisherfolks.

With the Fisheries Code introducing more problems rather than resolving the basic problems persistent in a backward fisheries sector, the call for an alternative fisheries law that will genuinely address the woes of the poorest sector in our society has now gained ground and is gathering strength from the mass movement.

SPOTLIGHT ON PHILIPPINE BIODIVERSITY

ROG AMON

In celebration of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines held a forum entitled *Defending Biodiversity, Defending Life: Multisectoral Forum on the Protection of Philippine Biodiversity* last May 31 at the Balay Kalinaw, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City.

Resource speakers from various environmental and wildlife conservation organizations presented the current state of Philippine biodiversity and the threats and challenges in the context of worsening plunder of our natural resources and emerging climate change impacts.

RICH BUT THREATENED RESOURCES

Gregg Yan from the World Wildlife Fund started the forum with an overview of the Philippine's rich biodiversity resources. According to recent biodiversity assessments, the country harbors rich terrestrial biodiversity and is the center of global marine biodiversity. Yan emphasized the value of biodiversity to human society, which ranged from consumptive benefits such as food and fuel, to ecosystems benefits such as climate regulation and watershed protection.

Yan also discussed the damaging effects of climate change, which has the potential to become the greatest threat to biodiversity over the course of the next few decades.

Romeo Trono, Executive Director of Conservation International, discussed the important linkss between biodiversity, human welfare and healthy ecosystems.

Trono identified primary threats to Philippine biodiversity such as habitat alteration, loss caused by destructive resource use, development activities and human population pressure. More specific threats to biodiversity include mining, logging and land conversion for industrial, agricultural and urban development. He identified lowland forest areas as the most critical habitats since they are the most accessible and highly vulnerable to human pressure, primarily encroachment, because of poverty and unmanaged population explosion.

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INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

An update on the current state of the international talks and policies on biodiversity under the negotiations of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) was given by Atty. Elpidio Peria of the Third World Network. Signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the convention is dedicated to the conservation of biological diversity along with the sustainable utilization, fair and equitable sharing of benefits from biological diversity and genetic resources.The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will take place in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010.

Atty. Peria said that one of the issues that stirred up from the deliberations of the Conven-

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tion on Biodiversity Conference of Parties (CBD COP) is the interface between biodiversity and climate. There is a question whether CBD should have a joint workplan with the UNFCCC or not.

Another challenge is posed on agricultural biodiversity, specifically on the future of agrofuels and trends in patenting of genetic resources.

One of the issues that will be on the agenda of the Nagoya negotiation is the adoption of an international agreement on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS). The ABS Protocol refers to how genetic resources and their benefits are accessed and used. The protocol allows facilitated access for all of the country's resources in exchange for benefits from the use of all of these resources. Atty. Peria posed challenges to the CSO community to study the issues and point out where government should make the trade-offs , raise strong positions to enable the Philippine government have some leeway in negotiating positions, and have a clear plan for COP 10.

PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS

Reactors from Church workers, fisherfolks, peasant women and youth sectors capped the forum with a unified call to stop the pattern of environmental abuse and disasters resulting from the country's economic policy.

"Situated amidst a society ravaged by foreign exploiters and their local counterparts, and equipped with the realization that the alarming rate of environmental destruction can not be barred without systemic changes. People's initiatives or actions for the protection of the environment should be viewed in the milieu or context of the country's history and the struggles of the Filipino people for a better life," said Rommel Linatoc of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines.

The UN declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). The celebrations for the International Year of Biodiversity are led by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

OBJECTIVES OF IYB

- Raise awareness of the importance of conserving biodiversity for human well-being and promote understanding of the economic value of biodiversity
- Enhance public knowledge of the threats to biodiversity and means to conserve it
- Encourage organizations (and through them individuals) to take direct or indirect biodiversity conservation activities
- Celebrate the achievements of Countdown 2010 partners and other stakeholders
- Reporting on the possible failures for not achieving the Target
- Prepare the ground for communicating the post-2010 target(s)

FRIENDSHIP AND KNOWING

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mean merely that I made friends, but the friendships made across nations and cultures gave me a real opportunity to experience issues on a more personal level. When I was in Japan, I could not vividly imagine poverty and disasters happening in distant countries. However, after experiencing life in the Philippines for two and half months, I can feel and imagine the lives, feelings, difficulties and hopes of the people. I have many friends in other countries and the issues there now became my issues as well.

The second major insight was an understanding as to what foreigners can do about issues in the other countries. As a foreign volunteer, I could not use Filipino languages and had some difficulty adapting to the culture there. Many times I wanted a truly local insight, but couldn't deny the fact I was Japanese and would always have a view somewhat tainted by being an outsider. On the other hand, I have also noticed that the issues here have an international aspect.

I understand now, that the first step to make a better world is to learn and inform; I learned lots of things that I have never heard of before or considered. Really, ignorance and indifference are the engines driving the most serious social problems.

I would like to say a very big thanks to all the Filipino people, who have made me aware of lots of precious things.