

# MAMAMAYAN, MAMAMAYANI!



*The First Galing Pook Citizenship Award:*

**How Citizens Creatively Contribute to Community Building**



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# The Galing Pook Awards

**T**he Galing Pook Awards is a pioneering program that recognizes innovation and excellence in local governance.

It started on October 21, 1993 under the joint initiative of the Local Government Academy-Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Ford Foundation, and other individual advocates of good governance from the academe, civil society and the government.

More than 290 programs from at least 175 local government units have already won recognition, including the current batch of 2015 awardees. The Galing Pook winners are chosen each year from a wide array of programs from local governments after undergoing a rigorous multi-level screening process.

For the first time also, the Galing Pook recognized exemplary practices of civil society groups in supporting good local governance through its Citizenship Award.

The winning programs are selected based on positive results and impact, promotion of people's participation and empowerment, innovation, transferability and sustainability, and efficiency of program service delivery.



## Vision

We are a leading resource institution that promotes innovation, sustainability, citizen empowerment, and excellence in local governance.

## Mission

We promote excellence in local governance through recognition, sharing of information and support of efforts to replicate best practices at the local level.

We encourage partnerships among civil society organizations, private sector, and government agencies at local, national and global levels to improve quality of life.



## Mamamayan, Mamamayani!

-Gary Granada

Ako ay nangangarap  
Na sana'y lumaganap  
Ang kaisipan, ang kalakaran  
Na mag-aangat sa ating lahat

Paglilingkod sa bayan  
Ay pinaghuhusayan  
Ang pamayanan may kakayanan  
Sa sambayanan na kung saan

ULITIN:  
Mamamayan ang mamamayani  
Mamamayan ang mamamayani  
Mamamayani, mamamayani  
Mamamayani ang mamamayan

Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani

Aking napatunayang  
Buhay ang bayanihan  
Sa laksang pook, sentro at purok  
Na tumitibok ang diwa ng

ULITIN:  
Mamamayan ang mamamayani  
Mamamayan ang mamamayani  
Mamamayani, mamamayani  
Mamamayani ang mamamayan

Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani  
Mamamayan, Mamamayani



## Galing Pook

*Music and lyrics by Gary Granada*

*Vocals: Gary Granada, Bayang Barrios, Noel Cabangon,  
Shane and Dave of Crazy as Pinoy, PETA kids, Luke Granada*

Ang aming adhikain  
Ay simple lang naman  
Sapat sa pangunahing  
Mga pangangailangan

Saan mahahagilap  
Ang mga munting pangarap  
Makaigpaw sa hirap  
Maalwang hinaharap

Sa punyagi at kusa  
Munting pamayanan  
Sa husay kinilala  
Umani ng karangalan

Kayraming nagsasabing  
Ang galing galing daw namin  
Saan ba nanggagaling  
Ano ba'ng anting-anting?

Simple lang yan  
Kaya mo yan, Bay!

Sa malikhaing paraan, sa paraang malikhain  
Kasama ang mamamayan, mamamaya'y pagsamahin  
Pagbabago na lantad, lantad na pagbabago  
Tuluy-tuloy na pag-unlad, tuluy-tuloy na pag-asenso

Sa dami ng balakid  
Sa dami ng hadlang  
Ang diwang nalulupig  
Nagtitiis na lang  
Ngunit huwag kang papayag  
Huwag kang pabubuway  
Tadhanang ating palad  
Nasa ating kamay



**Chorus counterpoint:**  
Galing Pook..

Ang sabi ng iba, ang galing ng Pilipino  
Magaling na mang-isa, mandaraya, manloloko  
Ang sakit sa tenga, kahit di mo matanggap  
Ganyan daw talaga, yan ang sabi ng lahat

Subalit doon sa aming mumunting komunidad  
Namayani ang maraming kabutihan ang hangad  
Pinaghusay ang lokal na gobyernong niluklok  
Pinagpala't natanghal na isang Galing Pook!

Ang sabi ng marami, Pilipino ay tamad  
Walang respeto sa sarili, dangal at dignidad  
Palakasang palasak, boto na nilalako  
Lider na nagbubuhay ng sarili ring bangko

Di man maikakaila ay huwag nating lahatin  
Di mo rin maitatatwa, di man sukat akalain  
Magandang mga balita sa mga suluk-suluk  
Kayraming halimbawa ng mga Galing Pook

Visit [www.galingpook.org](http://www.galingpook.org) to download lyrics and music.





# *Introduction*

## **Citizenship and Governance**

Citizens are at the heart of good governance, and governments are genuinely more effective when they listen to and work with citizens to solve developmental challenges especially in local governance.

The citizenship award aims to recognize the works of individuals and civil society organizations who continuously strive to find innovative solutions to community challenges through engagement with LGUs.

The three winners of the 2015 Galing Pook Citizenship Award embody the spirit of participatory democracy, having demonstrated over the years a keen understanding of the demands of good governance and sensitivity to changes in the social, political, economic, and environmental landscape.

For instance, the Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc., a non-profit, non-government organization based in Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental has been “pursuing efforts to put an end to armed conflict through peace building and development programs. BMFI, believing in the community-based, barangay focused approach, operates in more than 40 conflict-affected or disaster-affected communities throughout Mindanao and some parts of the Visayas and implements integrated and participatory programs at the barangay level. Because of BMFI’s efforts, communities and their leaders have shifted from thinking of peace as merely a security issue to peace as a development issue in which they have a role to play.”



On the southern side of Mindanao, the Tagum Cooperative has been working with citizens, business groups, government agencies, and the city LGU in implementing its Education and Community Development Program (ECDP) that includes scholarship projects, nutrition and health programs, savings and insurance programs and facilities, as well as funeral services.

Constructive engagement with government has always been the hallmark of the work being done by the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government or CCAGG, whether it is monitoring road construction projects or the use of public funds under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P) or Conditional Cash Transfer Program. One of its more innovative engagements is working with the Commission on Audit (COA) through a project called Citizen Participatory Audit where CCAGG was engaged as a partner in undertaking an audit of public sector projects.

In recognizing their contributions to enhancing local governance in their respective communities, the three organizations have become exemplars of what citizenship is all about.

By sharing with the public their stories through this publication, the Galing Pook Foundation hopes to ignite similar undertakings in other provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays where people can begin to fully exercise their citizenship roles.

This modest attempt at putting together unique experiences in citizenship is just the beginning of more explorations in the realm of meaningful local governance.

We will forever be grateful to the ideas, contributions, and support of Lorenzo Ubalde, Adrian Adove, Monette Montemayor, Gen Gabion, and Christine Beltran and Marwin Gotis of the Galing Pook Secretariat.



We also thank most sincerely Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) through its President and Chief Executive Officer Gilda Pico for supporting another innovation in the work of the Galing Pook Foundation. We also would like to thank LBP Board of Director Victor Gerardo Bulatao, LBP First Vice President Catherine Rowena Villanueva, LBP Corporate Affairs Head Butch Garcia, and LBP Corporate Department Information Officer Arnold Aldaba.

  
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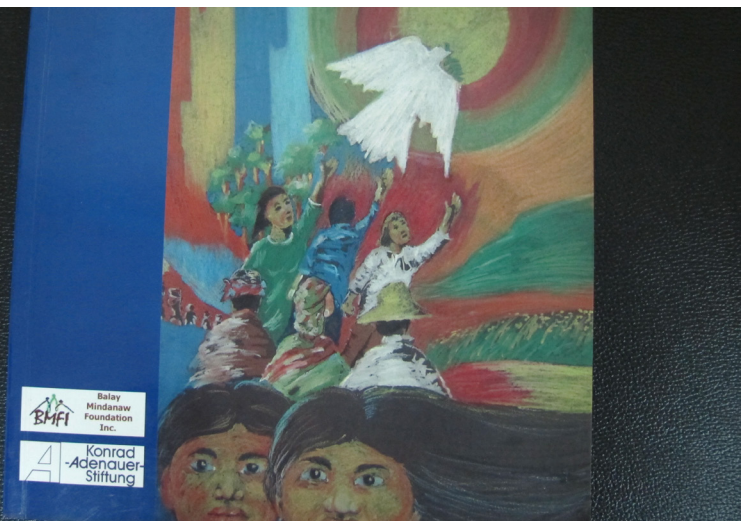
# Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc.

## Partnership, Participation, Peace



*“All You Need Is Love” by the Beatles is blaring through the amplifiers as the SUV nimbly negotiated the steep curves of the road from Cagayan de Oro City leading to Cagwait and Lianga in Surigao del Sur. It is a six hour drive but none of the car’s occupants seemed to mind and were singing along with the music. While the song was about love, the lyrics hinted at the underlying tones of eschewing war and conflict: “All you need is love...nothing you can know that isn’t known. Nothing you can see that isn’t shown. Nowhere you can be that isn’t where you want to be. It’s easy.”*

*E*harlito “Kaloy” Z. Manlupig, founder and president of Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. (BMFI), former civil servant, peace builder, development worker, cook, caterer, and avowed Beatles fan, snatches fragments from the song to describe the core programs of BMFI that revolves around peace and development. The trip to Surigao del Sur is meant to reveal the range of what Balay Mindanaw has been doing since 2003 in “community-based,







barangay-focused approach” for building peace in a region that has been periodically wracked by conflict and violence.

It was the same program that won them the first Galing Pook Citizenship Award recognizing organizations or institutions who “exhibit exceptional participation in promoting good governance principles in public service delivery, poverty reduction and inclusive growth in the country.”

Manlupig, who insists on being called Kaloy, said the BMFI was introduced to peace building work in 2003 when it was requested to help set up and act as mediator and independent secretariat of the peace process between the government and the Revolutionary Workers Party of Mindanao. The party had just broken off from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-New People’s Army (NPA)-National Democratic Front (NDF).

“We weren’t really into it (peace building) but when we thought it through, it was but logical to integrate peace in Balay’s sustainable development work,” Manlupig said.

Founded in 1996, the BMFI had very interesting, if not surreal, beginnings which probably explains why its strategies defy conventional thinking and why its birthing needs to be told. As Manlupig tells it, Balay Mindanaw was both germinated idea and happenstance, born as a store selling Maranao woven fabrics on a sidewalk in Cagayan de Oro City. It was shortly after he had resigned from the Department of Agrarian reform, “almost penniless but with

my ideologies intact” that Manlupig felt he had to continue the work he had started in agrarian reform communities.

When he named his store Balay Mindanaw, he had no inkling that it would become one of the more successful and respected non-government organizations in the Philippines.

“I had no money and then some of my friends from the NGO community asked me to cater their meetings and other activities. Soon I was running out of space in my kitchen and so I had to look for another place and found this old building downtown,” he said. That building became the first Balay Mindanaw Center but is now more widely known as the Peace Center.

A brochure handed out to visitors says that “BMFI is a Filipino Mindanao-based, Mindanao-focused non-stock, not-for-profit







## Community-Based Peace and Development According to the Gospel of BMFI

With the barangays (villages) as the locus and focus of interventions, the program revolves around these activities:

- Strengthening local people's organizations (PO) and cooperatives
- Strengthening barangay development and peace-seeking structures such as the Barangay Development Councils (BDC), Barangay Peace and Order Councils (BPOC), Lupong Tagapamayapa and Pangkat Tagapagkasundo
- Assisting in the formulation and review of the Barangay Peace and Development Plans employing participatory approaches and tools
- Pursuing access to justice and other resource tenure improvement issues
- Increasing agricultural productivity towards food security
- Strengthening intra-inter-faith dialogues and understanding
- Building peace champions and strengthening peace mechanisms in violence-affected areas and Indigenous Peoples communities

This program has evolved with significant impacts on agrarian reform, advocacy for political parity, good governance, and economic equity specifically in at least 94 rural communities in the province of Misamis Oriental, five in Surigao del Sur, five in North Cotabato, and one in Maguindanao.



foundation primarily engaged in promoting equity-based development and sustainable peace.”

### Meaningful conversations

It is late afternoon when the SUV stopped in the barangay hall of Tubo-Tubo, in the town of Cagwait, Surigao del Sur, where Manlupig and his party found three groups of women and men still in earnest discussion. They are officials and representatives of people's organizations from the barangays of Tubo-Tubo, Mat-e, and Tawagan who were putting the finishing touches on their Five-Year Barangay Peace and Development plans through participatory workshops, a hallmark of BMFI's "community-based and equity-based approaches" in development.

Gemma Q. Cillo, 43, barangay secretary of Mat-e from 2008 to 2013, describes



these approaches as strategies to encourage volunteerism. “I see the importance of participating even if I am no longer an official because we all have something to contribute,” she said. “Besides, I don’t want an elective position (anymore) because of too much politics.”

The chairperson of Barangay Tawagan, Vicente P. Ocoy Jr., concurs with what Cillo said about citizen participation in local governance. “Volunteers are very active in our barangay especially the women. During meetings and assemblies, women usually make up 80 per cent of attendees,” he said.

*“Natuto kami sa Balay kung paano mag-buo ng BPDP (Barangay Peace and Development Plan) lalo na kasi itong bayan namin ay itinuturing na red-flagged o mayroong insurgency concerns (We learned from Balay how to craft our BPDP given that our town is considered as ‘red-flagged’ or having insurgency concerns),”* Ocoy added.

The Barangay Development Planning activity in Cagwait is but part of BMFI’s larger peace-building tapestry described by Belle Garcia-Hernandez as being complemented by initiatives like peace education and research, promotions and publications, peace policy advocacy, and learning exchanges, citing a few examples.

Garcia-Hernandez, coordinator of the International Center for Peace in Mindanao (ICPEACE) and Security Sector Partnership Program, said that the “Peace Building and Development in Mindanao: Helping Build Empowered and Sustainable Communities” program considers the importance of

recognizing the capacity of local communities to solve their own problems. The ICPEACE was created to “focus on peace education, research, policy advocacy, security sector partnership, regional and international networking, and provide support to community-based work.”

To coordinate its activities and “to ensure relevance and effectiveness,” BMFI set up area-based teams called *balays* (houses) led by community organizers named SIADOs (Sustainable Integrated Area Development Organizers). The area-based teams are Balay Aleosan covering the towns of Aleosan and Alamada in North Cotabato; Balay Calia for Cagwait and Lianga in Surigao del Sur; and, Balay CdO for Cagayan de Oro and Sumilao in Bukidnon.







Manlupig said the SIADOs come across literally as shadows in the communities where they work, staying mostly in the background but facilitating change ubiquitously through what they describe as Local Peace Consultations and other activities to allow the people to “own” the development initiatives in their area.

Through the facilitation of the SIADOs, barangay folk in the municipalities of North Cotabato, Surigao del Sur, Bukidnon, and the city of Cagayan de Oro covered by BMFI’s peace building initiatives identified their priority projects in the Barangay Peace and Development Plans they have crafted. These range from water systems to electrification, road repairs to agricultural facilities, farm-to-market roads to pre-and

post-harvest facilities, and better housing and capacity development trainings.

These efforts highlight the premium that BMFI puts on people’s participation as a central pillar in its peace and development work. It describes this thrust as its “bias for community participation – for people to take ownership, responsibility and accountability for what is working for themselves and (in) building their future.”

The Foundation also cites the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) processes that include data gathering, profiling, analyzing, problem-solving, planning, and budgeting to encourage and enable more meaningful participation from citizens.

A project briefing paper describes how the barangay engagement works: “While BMFI provides facilitation, fund assistance in materials, food and resource persons, the barangay provides time, local transportation, and venue as counterparts, putting up their technical working group to finalize, represent and manage the next steps.”

An article in the Balay Mindanaw publication, *Peace Journeys: A Collection of Peace-Building Stories in Mindanao*, also illustrates this process and its implications for addressing peace and development issues in a village periodically threatened by fighting.

Titled *Madrasah Helps Keep the Peace in Aleosan*, the story narrates the experience of Barangay Dungan in Aleosan town, North Cotabato in building a madrasah (Islamic school) that the people identified as a priority when the villagers crafted their Barangay Peace and Development Plan, with the help





of the SIADOs, after a peace consultation in one of the *sitios*.

The village elder, Ustadz Nordin Dido, was quoted in the article as saying, “In that consultation, we crafted our barangay peace and development plan. On top of our priorities was the construction of a madrasah that could last a long time.”

According to Dido in the same article, “The madrasah is very important for us Muslims because it is in this school where we can preserve our Bangsamoro culture that we pass on to the next generations.”

Barangay Dungan was one of the areas in North Cotabato hardest hit by fighting between government soldiers and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in August 2008 after the aborted signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD). It also used to be haunted by a series of clan feuds locally referred to as *rido*.

Peace observers have noted, however, that unlike before, residents from other barangays would now regularly visit Dungan to trade and sell goods.

As shown by BMFI’s program, building peace can also be a painstaking process involving modest activities like implementing small livelihood projects identified by communities and continuing dialogues on how to iron out local issues.

## Journeying for Peace

*“As we live a life of ease...every one of us has all we need...Sky of blue and sea of green...”*

*“In our yellow submarine...”* so goes one of the lines in the famous Beatles song of the same title, now segueing into the soundtrack of the car as it traversed the main highway of Lianga. The lyrics click, resonate, and somewhat apocryphally, reassemble as snippets of thinking, belief, and practice about a “peace journey” that says people have all they need to work things out for the good of the community.

Kaloy Manlupig reaches into the backburner of his memory, “Reflecting on the experience, I can say that the process has indeed become a journey of trust-building, and a space for transforming persons, relationships, institutions, and hopefully, societal structures.”

While these can easily be ascribed to words said by a dreamer they are actually





real-world and real-time indicators about how, for instance, the Lawig Kalinaw (Peace Journey) Movement has come into being and how it can, and does, build a wider constituency for peace.

Those whose lives have been touched in one way or another by the program include soldiers and military officers, representatives of the MILF especially members of the negotiating panel, local officials, members of non-government organizations and other sectors.

Perhaps BMFI's International Center for Peace in Mindanaw (ICPEACE) could illustrate this more clearly through its major activities:

- Facilitating and managing peace courses such as the Operation Peace Course or OP Kors! This is a basic course that includes training of trainers and other thematic sessions for local leaders, NGO workers, government officials, and military and police personnel.
- Building and nurturing the formation of Peace Journey (Lawig Kalinaw), a movement of peace builders trained through OP Kors!
- Helping institutionalize peacebuilding advocacy with various stakeholders like the academe, local government units, church-based formations, state security (AFP and PNP) including its training institutions like the Philippine Military Academy or PMA, and non-state combatants.

- Pursuing multi-partnerships related to security sector initiatives such as Oversight to the Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) of the AFP; Provincial Peace and Order Councils' (PPOC) reorganization and strengthening.
- Advocating and publishing transformational stories from among communities and peace workers as well as foot soldiers and police.

The Operation Peace Course, now more popularly and jocularly referred to simply as OP Kors!, provides a platform for building “peace cadres coming from different sectors of society, and multiplying peace constituency at different levels of engagement. It provides theoretical inputs with matching practical application based on community-based experiences and other peace initiatives. A customized course for the military has been developed and continues to be implemented until today,” said *I see PEACE in MINDANAW*, an occasional monograph of BMFI.

OP Kors! strikes a chord with participants especially those who have lived most of their lives as armed combatants, like soldiers who have been fighting pocket wars in Mindanao.

Ma. Lourdes C. Martinez, Outcome Manager of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) of Surigao del Sur and Executive Officer of the Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC), describes the OP Kors! process as “foundational” that focuses first on the participant’s “self.”





“We (Surigao del Sur) were the first to do peace orientation in the Caraga (region,” she said, referring to the result of PPOC’s partnership with BMFI. “I asked BMFI to promote OP Kors! with the provincial government,” she added.

It was a time of flux in Surigao del Sur. Martinez cited an incident sometime in 2012 when rebels of the New People’s Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), attacked two municipalities at the same time. “It was a terrible experience,” she said.

In the September 29, 2014 Peace Summit in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur Governor Johnny Pimentel was quoted by one newspaper as saying, “Insurgency is really a big problem in the province.” The newspaper report went on to say that the governor asked the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) “to send more peace and development troops in the province to crush the insurgency.” The language was telling since there was no mention of troops being asked to launch attacks.

“Our presence here today is very important and this is one better way of bringing our minds together with the same goal of achieving peace and development,” Pimentel was further quoted as saying.

Martinez explained that working and learning with community leaders and members of security forces through OP Kors! had given her deeper insights about achieving peace and that other programs of the province should be harmonized with peace and development initiatives.

## Peace and disaster risk reduction

While BMFI’s program essentially “looks at the major problems of poverty and landlessness characterized by inequity and injustice, resulting in underdevelopment and unpeace in Mindanao,” it also examines other dimensions including the natural environment that could impact not only on its program but on the peace building process itself.

Manlupig said that at the time it never crossed his mind that Balay Mindanaw would someday become a disaster risk reduction and response organization.

But Typhoon Sendong (international name Washi) changed his thinking and so many other things, including the





program thrusts of many non-government organizations, when it ravaged in December 2011 northern Mindanao especially Cagayan de Oro City where BMFI is based.

“It was very personal. It was as if Sendong turned the world upside down. And then I saw a mud-covered Froilan Gallardo (longtime Mindanao journalist) struggling with his cameras and so I gave him a ride and as I did I thought of all the others who had been affected by the typhoon,” he said.

“This is our own backyard and we had to do something,” Manlupig added. Thus was born DREAM or the Disaster Risk Reduction and Resiliency-Building and Emergency Assistance Mission based on the principles of transparency and accountability.

The DREAM was also some sort of trauma healing and giving back to the

community for BMFI staff like the families of Ayi and Belle Hernandez, Richard and Amor Rejas, Flong Flores, and others who survived the onslaught of Typhoon Sendong by clinging to rooftops and trees.

It was a time of tumult and horrific events but it was also a time for humanitarianism to shine through with the Balay Mindanaw Peace Center becoming an evacuation center, beacon of hope, and inspiration for people to rise above the devastation.

It wasn't long before BMFI was responding to subsequent calamitous events like typhoons Pablo, Yolanda, Senyang, and Ruby battering regions outside Mindanao. It has also been providing emergency assistance to some 3,000 individuals displaced by military operations in Surigao del Sur and temporarily staying at the Tandag City Sports Complex.

Balay Mindanaw adopted the slogan, “We refuse to be victims. We choose to be resources” to underline its disaster risk reduction and resiliency work. It also reflects the Foundation's core principles of partnership and participation whether it is helping put together barangay development plans or facilitating peace-building training workshops.

Somewhere in Gusa, Cagayan de Oro City, Barangay Chair Marlo L. Tabac is in a huddle with members of the Barangay Shelter and Housing Committee. They are discussing plans for the relocation of ISFs or Informal Settler Families occupying foreshore areas of the barangay which is bordered by Macajalar Bay and the Bigaan River.







“Almost 70 per cent of our barangay’s population are informal settlers and many are living in danger zones and are most vulnerable to natural hazards,” he said. “That is why we must act now,” he added.

Integrated in Gusa’s 5-Year Barangay Peace and Development Plan (BPDP) facilitated by BMFI is a disaster risk reduction and management plan finalized in 2014 and linked to one of its award winning programs, solid waste management.

“With the help of BMFI we were able to develop not only our BPDP and DRRMP but we were also able to set up our Barangay Ecological Solid Waste Management Council,” added Tabac. “We’ve also learned about the interconnectedness of development, peace and the environment.”

The barangay chair believes that many of Gusa’s achievements would not have been possible without the participation of its citizens, including schoolchildren, who also were part of the planning process through consultative assemblies and community conversations.

According to one barangay *kagawad*, the successful staging of the 2nd Recyclable Materials Fashion Show in 2015, where 130 models from five schools in Gusa participated, demonstrates the collective

spirit of barangay residents in creatively addressing local issues.

The road is already mottled by the gray darkness of early evening as the music player shuffles out the last song in the Beatles track:

*“Imagine there’s no countries  
It isn’t hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace...”*

*“You may say I’m a dreamer  
But I’m not the only one  
I hope someday you’ll join us  
And the world will be as one.”*

Fittingly enough, the lyrics somehow sum up what Balay Mindanaw is all about.



# Concerned Citizens Of Abra for Good Governance From The Road to Perdition to 'Daang Matuwid'



*Abra Province has earned the notoriety of being the “Murder Capital of Northern Luzon” because of its relatively high number of killings, political or not. Because of its violent political history and the huge number of private armed groups in the area, Abra has been perennially listed a hot spot by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) since Ferdinand Marcos was booted out of power in 1986.*



**I**n 2011, the municipal council of the capital town of Bangued was considering an ordinance banning motorcyclists from wearing helmets to prevent gun-for-hire riding-in-tandem shootings. Fortunately more health-conscious heads prevailed. However the “motorcycle riding-in-tandem” ordinance was finally passed in May 2015, prohibiting males who are not related to each other from riding a motorcycle in tandem with or without helmets.





However the most feared entity in Abra, that even the warlords and political godfathers are afraid of, is the CCAGG (Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance). It is located in a nondescript room on the second floor of a local radio station. Only a security guard carries a firearm there even if it is said that almost all hot-blooded males in Abra packed a gun wherever they go. Incidentally, the office is located at the corner of Rizal and Padre Zamora, two Filipino martyrs.

## The “Revolutionary” NGO

CCAGG shares its birthday with the February 1986 EDSA Revolution, and for good reason.

The founding members, called the CCAGG 100, were all volunteers of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel), an election watch group supported by the Catholic Church.

Although Abra now belongs to the Cordillera region, it used to be with the Ilocos region. Its political system definitely reflected that of Ilocos with its penchant for guns, goons and gold.

Pura Sumangil, one of the provincial Namfrel leaders at that time (the chair was then Abra Bishop Artemio Rillera, SVD), said that they had their share of election horror stories.

“Some of the volunteers bravely accompanied the ballot boxes to the municipal center only to be met by armed

groups who snatched the boxes and threw them to the river,” she said.

The Namfrel volunteers were in a meeting at the Pastoral Center in Bangued when news of the EDSA Revolt broke out.

“We had a common bond so we thought of holding on to our group to help the people,” she said.

“We came out with names for our group but the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance won,” said Aniceta C. Baltar.

“What is good governance, by the way,” Sumangil asked herself 30 years later. “Governance is not just by a few but by everyone . . .”

Aside from Baltar and Sumangil, the other core members of the CCAGG 100 were Eric Basa, Elizabeth Valera, Leticia Madriaga, Merla Ruiz and Irene Bringas.







## CCAGG's Mission

To act as watchdogs of government performance and making sure that the new government, and those that would follow, fulfill the promise of being democratic, transparent, and accountable;

To catalyze the revitalization and formulation of autonomous groups on geographic and sectoral levels;

To establish permanent structures for regular and direct consultation with the public on their needs, problems, and interests;

To deal effectively with all other agencies/institutions to ensure that the public's interests are on the political agenda;

To support government programs that align with the organization's goals;

To monitor government and semi-government agencies and contribute to building a new order based on the renewed power of the people in the quest for justice and peace; and

To undertake projects that aim to uplift the socioeconomic and political conditions of the people of Abra.

## First blood

CCAGG's first endeavor as an NGO set the tone for the group that both supporters and critics remembered it so well. This was the project to boost local employment and encourage citizen participation in governance.

On August 1986, then newly installed President Corazon Aquino launched the P9 billion flagship program of her government called the Community Employment and Development Program (CEDP), with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) as oversight. While job generation was attractive, it was good governance that the CCAGG was interested in. Half of the budget was supposed to go to infrastructure projects.

Abra was a prime beneficiary of CEDP, and the money was intended for Abra-Ilocos Sur Road, the only major highway out of the province, was then a gravel road. Aside from bad roads, the 1987 report of the Abra District Engineering Office said the province lacked a comprehensive flood control systems and barangay roads.

The CCAGG, along with two other CSOs, was deputized to monitor the CEDP projects in Abra.

Baltar said CCAGG members were trained by NEDA to monitor the progress of the projects, provide information in impact assessment, disseminate information about the CEDP to the people and report the progress of the program, including irregularities, to the government.



Fortunately for CCAGG, among its founding members were engineers of Abra Irrigation Project, an irrigation project of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia and the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc., for the towns of Tayum, Bangued and Pidigan.

After signing a memorandum of agreement with NEDA and Department of Budget and Management, Sumangil said that they broadcasted on air and in local newspapers the details of the infrastructure project, including its budget.

To prepare for project monitoring, the CCAGG formed committees, with three to five members each: organization and mobilization, documentation, education and training, logistics, programs, and research.

Sumangil said that local public works officials in the province “did not like us.” She said that they were ignored and dismissed, not knowing they have technical experts among them. They went on monitoring anyway. Then they saw an advertisement in one local paper announcing the accomplishment of twenty projects by the DPWH in Abra in March 1987.

“We know this was untrue so we held a special meeting. Then we decided to file our own report, complete with our own documentation and photos, and called on the central office of DPWH to conduct an independent monitoring,” she said.

The DPWH secretly formed its own team, did their own inspection quietly and held consultations with the people, including the CCAGG and the religious sector.

## CCAGG Projects and Initiatives

**The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the town of Boliney from 1991 to May 1993.** This is a P7 million project funded by CEBEMO Netherlands and Oxfam Canada through PDAP. This “Inter NGO Disaster Response Services” was spurred by the July 16, 1990 earthquake that affected Abra, especially its upland towns of Boliney, Bucloc, Daguoman and Sallapadan. Scores of residents were killed and many families were displaced. CCAGG was among the CSOs in the province which formed the INDRS to help rebuild affected communities.

**Community organizing for Forest Lease Management from December 1993 to December 1997 in coordination with DENR.** Accredited as NGO Partner of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) since 1989, CCAGG monitored and evaluated the ADB- and OECF-funded reforestation projects and regular funded projects using the Inspection Chart Mapping (ICM). CCAGG was contracted by DENR to do a two-year community organizing project in the Forest Land Management Agreement (FLMA) areas in San Isidro and Nagtipulan villages in Lagangilang, Abra.

**Site assessment and advocacy for the preservation of Buasao watershed and Mt. Poswey from June 1995 to March 1998 through the Foundation for the Philippine Environment and the United Nations Development Program.** The CCAGG helped organize and strengthen the communities in Buasao and



Mt. Poswey, both bio-diversity hotspots in the region that are threatened by logging and mining. The project encouraged communities to practice environmentally-sound indigenous practices like the *lapat* system. The CCAGG also undertook a Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation Program with FPE from April 1999 to June 2003 using community participation techniques.

**CCAGG conducted Preschool Service Contracting Program with the Department of Education from October 1998 to May 1999.** CCAGG organized 18 preschool classes for the disadvantaged five-year-olds in 5th and 6th class municipalities in Abra who are least expected to start schooling.

**From October to December 2001, CCAGG participated in the “Enhancing the Public Accountability Program of the Philippines COA” project with UNDP and Commission on Audit.** This included the participatory audit of road projects and projects under the Soil Conservation and Watershed Management in the province. This public accountability experiment was dubbed a success and replicated in Samar, Daet, Camarines Norte and nearby Mt. Province. “A Guide to the Conduct of Participatory Audit” was jointly published by CCAGG and COA. CCAGG was the first NGO to work with COA in government auditing and the partnership was replicated with other NGOs in Baguio City, Benguet, Camarines Norte and Leyte.

**In 2003, CCAGG partnered with the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG) through its Government**



The DPWH team validated the CCAGG report and said that the DPWH Abra report was incorrect in saying they have completed the projects when these were still ongoing. Moreover, the projects proceeded with hardly any approved plans, specifications and the detailed engineering requirements.

Investigations were mostly held in Manila but the 20 CCAGG members were able to join them, courtesy of a borrowed jeep and some residents who donated food, like vegetables, and some cash for the trips.

It would be two years before the DPWH Central Office acted on the erring DPWH officials: the provincial DPWH chief was spared although he was not allowed to be assigned in Abra anymore while 11 engineers were transferred and suspended from five to nine months.

On February 1988, President Corazon Aquino named CCAGG the “Outstanding NGO in Region I for Community Service.”





Since then, the approval of CCAGG had become mandatory during the DPWH's bidding and awards committee meetings and no project funds were released without its monitoring report. To date, CCAGG has monitored more than 600 infrastructure projects in and outside Abra. Of these 600, more than 20 are considered major ones.

### Other projects

After their first project, the CCAGG received funding for similar monitoring and evaluation projects. They also received funds to do other projects. It was an advantage that the CCAGG was the only NGO in the area. Sumangil said that they usually have one project per year, although some of their projects usually last for more than one year.

The last three projects were cited by the Galing Pook Awards committee in awarding

**Watch (G-Watch) program and the Department of Education in the Textbook Count Program.** The program monitored the procurement of textbooks for elementary and secondary education and its distribution and delivery to public schools. The program helped improve DepEd's procurement, distribution of textbooks and the accountability feedback for its suppliers. CCAGG later tapped to train participants for the Bantay Eskwela InfraWatch project.

**On February 2012, CCAGG partnered with DILG-Abra in the so-called Paracetamol Project to make local government units comply with the department's full disclosure policy.** Both CCAGG and DILG-Abra jointly monitored and evaluated the towns of Bucay, Langiden, Luba, Malibcong and San Quintin as well as the Abra Provincial Hospital and four district hospitals in their compliance with the established procedures, rules and regulations in the purchase of medicines specifically paracetamol. The CCAGG trained four CSO (Barangay Pastoral Council of Luba, Bucay Movement for Change, Rang-ay ken Namanama Para iti Panagdur-as ti Langiden and Malibcong Banao Bodong Federation Inc) to monitor the rural health units in their areas, and the Banacao Peoples Association for Good Governance together with the Young Concerned Citizens for Good Governance (CCAGG's youth arm) and the Diocesan Youth Ministry to monitor the Abra Provincial Hospital and the district hospitals of Bucay, Dolores, La Paz and Villaviciosa. DILG-Abra provided technical assistance to CCAGG.





**CCAGG worked with the Department of Agriculture - Cordillera Administrative Region in the “Social Mobilization, Participatory Investment Planning and Land Titling under the Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project II (CHARMP2)” from June 2010 to May 2012.** CCAGG facilitated participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation in 32 barangays in Abra located in the upland municipalities of Boliney, Bucloc, Sallapadan, Tubo, Luba, Lacub, Licuan-Baay and Malibcong. CCAGG crafted an NGO Global Work Plan including the coordination and establishment of links with PSO-CHARMP, LGUs and other concerned agencies, coordination with barangay management groups and municipal management groups, facilitation in the formation and mobilization of POs and other groups in their implementation of agro-forestry and reforestation projects, and the formation and capacitation of project monitoring and evaluation teams.

**On December 2010, CCAGG was tasked by the Department of Social Welfare Development to help in the Family Development Session of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.** The CCAGG monitored the implementation of the Pantawid Pamilya and assisted the beneficiaries. Later, the CCAGG joined the Partnership with Transparent Fund in a project called “Guarding the Integrity of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program Project” or the I-Pantawid Project. The objective was to verify if the beneficiaries were really the poorest of the poor.

the 2015 Citizenship Award to CCAGG for “Community-Based Monitoring of Government Programs and Services.”

1. CCTP Watch
2. Engaging Citizens on Full Disclosure Policy through Monitoring of Paracetamol Medicine
3. Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Management Project(CHARMP)

On December 1989, the CCAGG was also recognized by the Federation of the People’s Economic Council and Department of Trade and Industry – Abra for “bringing economic benefits to the province through its infrastructure monitoring work.” In 2000, CCAGG was awarded the Transparency International’s Integrity Award for “fighting graft and corruption in pursuit of good governance.” In 2005, CCAGG was cited as one of the outstanding civil society partners of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Pura Sumangil was an awardee of the Aurora Aragon Peace Awards Foundation in 1994. She was also among the 27 Filipino women nominees to the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

## **‘You’re still around? How can that be?’**

One CCAGG staff said that one irked local politician asked him, “You’re still around? How can that be?”

It was a question the CCAGG had been trying to answer themselves.



“We are apolitical,” Sumangil had been fond of saying.

Despite its stature in the community, CCAGG remained low-key. In their first road monitoring project, they realized that many of the project contracts were controlled by local and neighboring politicians.

Baltar said that among their basic office policies is to use their own resources and not to hitch a ride with politicians.

“We call it our bring-your-own policy. Bring your own fare. Bring your own *baon*,” she said.

“In my 16 years with the CCAGG, we never solicited funds from politicians. When its members and volunteers become resource persons, they share part of their honoraria with the CCAGG to support its mission,” Myrna Caoagas, another CCAGG 100 member, was quoted as saying in a report.

“Sometimes, we contracted community organizing work for line agencies. CCAGG members who are abroad also donated funds or materials to support its mission. That’s how we funded our monitoring activities,” Caoagas added.

CCAGG leaders also decided that their meetings, during the early years, will be kept confidential. This was to prevent the disagreements among themselves from reaching the politicians who might take advantage of them. They also maintained their political neutrality, considering the nature of Abra politics.

Feudal infighting among clans has defined local politics in the Ilocos provinces like the Ortegans of La Union, Singsons of Ilocos Sur and Marcoses of Ilocos Norte.

In recent years, Abra’s politics became more violent. The pro-Marcos tandem of Arturo Barbero for congressman (he is the former governor whose father is long-time Abra Congressman Carmelo Z. Barbero) and Andres Bernos for governor was replaced by Rudolfo Bernardez and Vicente “Vicsyd” Valera, respectively.

Although both were acting as OIC, Bernardez became congressman for one term while Valera would rule as governor for 20 years from 1987 to 2007. His wife, Ma. Zita Claustro-Valera would replace him from 1998 to 2001 while he became congressman.

CCAGG maintained distance from Valera when he was Governor.

Three Abra mayors were murdered during those times. Tubo Mayor Jose Segundo was shot dead in his hometown in December 2001. Former Valera ally turned oppositionist Clarence Benwarens was shot dead on November 7, 2002 while inside a church in Laguna. Marc Ysrael Bernos, the mayor of La Paz, who spoke openly against Valera, was shot at close range while watching a basketball game in his town on January 13, 2006. The main suspect in his killing is his own vice mayor, Freddie Dupo, a close Valera associate who disappeared after the murder.

Even the assassination of guerrilla priest Conrado Balweg in his hometown in Malibcong on December 31, 1999, which the New People’s Army admitted to have done, is suspect. Valera has admitted to being an honorary cadre of the NPA in Abra and Balweg ran against Valera in the 1998 election for congress.



On December 16, 2006, Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin was shot dead while attending the wedding of his niece in Quezon City. Bersamin is Valera's cousin but the governor was tagged for the murder and went into hiding. Valera was arrested in 2009 and was convicted only last November 2015. Dupo, who was later arrested and became state witness, tagged Valera as the mastermind.

A CCAGG founder said that Bersamin was a close ally of the NGO and would sometimes financially support the group.

After the murder of Bersamin, the political landscape changed in Abra when the anti-Valera politicians took over.

Bersamin's brother, Eustaquio, won as governor in 2007 while Lagayan Mayor Cecelia Luna, who was ambushed but unhurt during the campaign that year, won the

Congress seat. She was later replaced after her first term by Bernos' widow, Ma. Jocelyn Valera-Bernos.

Although the relationship between Eustaquio Bersamin and the CCAGG was not really that warm, the governor vowed to build more roads for Abra.

Gov. Bersamin completed the 700-meter Sto. Tomas Bridge in Manabo in 2013, 27 years after it was started. The 900-meter long Calaba Bridge across the Abra River linking La Paz, Dolores and Lagayan to Bangued was finished in 2010

The local government announced all its infrastructure accomplishments in its website from 2011 to 2013.

On July 2015, the COA, through CCAGG, found irregularities in 22 infrastructure projects in Abra, totaling P136 million. The projects include bridges, roads, a micro-hydro project, and a housing project. They have incomplete documentation and dubious bidding process and awards of contract.

Now many politicians are wary of the CCAGG.

"CCAGG are fault finders," said one mayor in a municipality near Bangued.

"If they are really doing their job, then Abra should be OK now. The actual condition of Abra justifies how CCAGG is working. It proves that they are not doing their projects and advocacies well because Abra is still the same," the mayor said.

"Sometimes they chose which project to monitor; they should monitor all projects."







CCAGG has taken all this in stride. The volatile nature of politics forced CCAGG to trust mostly themselves. Baltar said that they would monitor each other closely and had regular meetings so they would know not only the progress of their work but also the condition of each member.

This also encouraged CCAGG members to revisit their roots. Sumangil's other favorite word is "capacitation" or "empowerment of the people," which she said she learned from the EDSA Revolution.

But credit could also be given to the use of the Cordilleran form of consensus-building called *dap-ay*, which is a pan-Cordillera way of governance by getting the decision of the village elders.

In upland Abra, which is predominated by the Tinguians, *dap-ay* is still being employed even during elections when the elders or the *panglaklakayen* would choose the candidates who will run for election. The *dap-ay* is governed by a series of specific penal codes called the *pagta*.

Many among the CCAGG 100 are Tinguians who employ *dap-ay* in their monitoring and reporting work for their projects. And by consulting the people more than the officials, the CCAGG gained some form of protection.

Trust was built that later, the people themselves gave them tips about shoddy road construction or poor or nonexistent government services in their villages.

## NGO politics

The CCAGG was typecast as a monitoring NGO after its initial project. Later, when it undertook other projects, it was criticized.

A parish priest said, "The primary task of CAGG is to monitor projects. But now they are accepting contracts for projects. They became project implementers. The question now is, who monitors the monitoring body?"

"Since the organization has funds to implement advocacies, the spirit of its volunteerism is lost. They even refused small-funded projects," he said.

In 2005, the Northern Luzon Coalition for Good Governance was established with the initiative of CCAGG. NLCCGG now has 24 organizations and individuals based in the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Cordillera







(CAR) regions. It is the only network in the three regions with the sole purpose of promoting good governance through social accountability, or what it calls “responsible stewardship in governance.”

In 2010, the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific Foundation (ANSA-EAP), a network that helps improve governance by connecting citizens and governments, opened a partnership in the Philippines, concentrating in Mindanao and Northern Luzon and formed the Northern Luzon Convenor’s Group with CCAGG as its coordinating organization. Its other partners are Cordillera Volunteer Missioners, Inc. (CVM), Diocesan Social Action Commission—Bayombong, Kalinga Apayao Religious Sector Association, Responsible

Citizens, Empowered Communities and Solidarity towards Social Change, Social Action and Development Center Monitoring Team Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe and Social Action Center of the Diocese of Iligan.

ANSA-EAP helped facilitate the NLGCC’s activities and CCAGG’s training methods among its members are highlighted in the training of coalition members. The CCAGG taught their partners their own brand of monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes.

On November 2007, ANSA-EAP started the Bantay Lansangan or Road Watch Project, a 30-month project aimed at monitoring and advocating reforms in the Philippine roads. It is a partnership of 23 organizations, composed of CSOs, private sector and development partners that monitors the performance of DPWH.

In recognition of its pioneering work the CCAGG was chosen as the head NGO, with Pura Sumangil as the over-all chair of Bantay Lansangan.

## Media backing

Merla Quintay Ruiz, 58, is also one of the CCAGG 100, having been a Namfrel Abra officer. She was originally the treasurer of the NGO back when they were monitoring DPWH Abra.

“We used to have no finances then so what was my role as a treasurer? That was until the projects came and auditing has been done,” she said.





Because Ruiz had been reporting for local radio stations about the activities of Namfrel during the Snap Elections, it was decided that she become the CCAGG media liaison. When the Catholic Church started DZPA Radyo Totoo under the Catholic Media Network in 1995, Ruiz joined it and became the radio station manager, a post she still holds to this day.

The diocese also established *Abra Today* much earlier than DZPA, but *Abra*, because of its remoteness and topography, was made for radio that became dominant in no time. Today, *Abra* has two AM and four FM stations, but DZPA has retained its status as the old reliable.

Baltar said because DZPA maintained its neutrality, people regarded it as the people's voice and not the voice of the politicians. DZPA has also started online streaming and maintains a Facebook account for its listeners.

CCAGG introduced in 2000 a radio program called "Allangugan (Echoes)," aired on Sunday evening with replays the following night. Allangugan, which is anchored by CCAGG members, discusses socio-political issues in Abra. Sometimes it also tackles the current projects of the NGO.

Media work in Abra is not without its hazards. On June 17, 2009, a "riding-in-tandem group" (local term for assassins riding on motorcycles) fired at the St. Arnold Janssen Communication Center where DZPA, *Abra Today* and CCAGG are located. Although no one was hurt, Ruiz said the shots were meant for them.

A month before, on May 14, someone sprayed bullets at the residence of Marjorie Bandyrel-Trinidad, the *Abra Today* news editor. Her window was broken and she found a .45 caliber slug near her bed. Incidentally, the Trinidad family was inside the St. Arnold Janssen building when the shooting incident occurred.

On February 2011, the decomposing body of 38-year-old Cirilo Gallardo was found at the diocesan house for priests near the DZPA transmitter. He was stabbed repeatedly and his house ransacked.

Gallardo was a faculty member of the Divine Word College in Abra. He was also a broadcaster for DZPA and its FM station, Spirit FM. He was also a leading member of the Young Concerned Citizens of Abra for





Good Government, which is the youth arm of CCAGG first established in 1988.

Most of the YCCAGG members were from Divine Word College and Gallardo was among its leaders. Like most media killings in the Philippines, the Gallardo case remains unsolved.

One of the innovations introduced in 2006 by CCAGG regarding media is the production of manuals that are given away free. These are “Laymanized Manual on Monitoring Projects by a Practitioner,” and the “Bantay Lansangan Procedures Manual for Road Construction and Maintenance.” Both can be accessed online and used by CSOs.

The CCAGG’s joint audit with COA also produced in 2001 a manual called “A Guide to the Conduct of Participatory Audit.” Another manual, the “The Conditional Cash Transfer Program Watch Project” was produced with funding from the Partnership Transparency Fund. Both can be downloaded online.

## Imagining Abra without CCAGG

It is hard to imagine Abra today without CCAGG.

“Graft and corruption would be prevalent without the check and balance. Although there would still be corruption escaping, at least it would be minimized,” said a resident of Bangued.

“We can still feel its presence. We had projects with them and they act like the

police although sometimes they are fault finders,” said Pet Anceta, the municipal agriculturist of Pidigan.

“Abra will survive,” said Minda Aznar. “I think CCAGG has an important role. They’ve been able to push thru things that did not exist before. Like the open forum for candidates during election. That did not exist before.”

“It has been thirty years since CCAGG was formed,” said Pura Sumangil. “I am 74 years old. Most of us are women but that is only accidental. I am still excited with every project.

“I don’t know how many members we’ve had. I stopped counting.”





# *Tagum Cooperative* **Cooperation, Caring and Concern for the Community**



*Edna Beterbo, a mother of three, never thought she would see the day when her 7-year-old daughter, the eldest of her brood of three, would overcome her shyness and emerge top of her Grade 1 class at the Sabangan Elementary School in San Isidro, Davao del Norte.*



**I**t was, according to Edna, nothing short of a miracle. Her daughter Mariel Joyce has been identified by the Department of Education's (DepEd) school feeding program as among those schoolchildren who are "severely wasted."

The P7.2 billion extensive feeding program aims to help four million undernourished children, classified either as "severely wasted" (those who are very thin for their height) or "wasted" (who can



become severely wasted if their condition is not immediately addressed).

But since the government can't be everywhere, including this part of Mindanao, the slack has been taken up by Tagum Cooperative, which can only be described as maverick and unafraid to break the barriers of conservative thinking when it comes to fiscal management and cooperativism.

After all, it was through the cooperative that Edna Beterbo had witnessed something like a small miracle.

*"Hindi ko talaga naisip kabit na sa panaginip na magiging masigla at masayahin ang anak ko at maging mahusay sa klase (I really couldn't imagine nor dream that my daughter would one day become lively, and cheerful and do very well in class)," she said. "Ilang buwan lang matapos ma-introduce ng Tagum Cooperative yun feeding program malaki agad pinaghago ng anak ko (Just a few months after the feeding program was introduced by Tagum Cooperative there was a tremendous change in my daughter)."*

Sabangan Elementary School was one of three in the province identified under the Tagum Cooperative's Education, Community Development Program (ECDP) through its "Adopt-a-School Hot Lunch" initiative complementing the DepEd feeding program.

Volunteer mothers like Edna take turns each week to cook and prepare the meals of the schoolchildren. On any given day, five mothers perform marketing and kitchen duties which make for a lively mix of banter and serious discussion about their children's weight and performance in class. They

also elected officers among themselves to efficiently run the feeding program. Edna is the current Vice-President.

The TC Hot Lunch program aims to assist primary schools in their health and nutrition program, improve the condition of the severely wasted and wasted pupils, motivate regular attendance of students, and develop students' behavior, socialization, kindness, and cooperation.

In 2014, the "Hot Lunch" program came to Sitio Limon in Barangay Pandapan, Tagum City where for the first time 35 children from the Dibabawon tribal community were provided nutritious meals. A deed of donation was later signed by Tagum Cooperative in favor of the Tagum City Federation of Barangay Tribal Councils for the institutionalization of the program.





The feeding program embodies Tagum Cooperative's fundamental philosophy based on the 7th Cooperative Principle of Concern for the Community where "impressive growth in net surplus also means bigger budget to effectively implement community development programs and projects."

"It is also our way of giving back to the community, our way of sharing all the blessings from God," said Norma R. Pereyras, chairperson of the Tagum Cooperative Board of Directors.

Brash, bold, and decisive, Pereyras, or Normskie as she prefers to be called, personifies Tagum Cooperative's multi-faceted character. Full of kinetic energy and

not even gasping for breath after gracing the groundbreaking for a PWD (persons with disability) center in a far-off barangay and then rushing off to facilitate a gender workshop in the middle of the city, she could easily put to shame somebody many years junior to her 70 years.

"Even before the CDA (Cooperative Development Act) law was passed, we were already doing social development," she said.

Pereyras firmly believes that community service should go hand in hand with any business enterprise and it is that principle that provides the basis for Tagum Cooperative's community development programs.

The Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Region XI Davao Extension Office describes Tagum Cooperative as a success story. It wrote in its website: "From its humble beginning as Holy Name Society (HNS) of Tagum Parish in May 1967 with only a handful of members and an available Share Capital of only P80, Tagum Cooperative had slowly stepped up to the limelight, now, conveniently serving its more than 120,000 members (60,385 regular members, 10,191 associate members and 49,682 youth members), of which 57.10% are composed of women members, coming from Tagum City and nearby provinces and cities, with P3.42 billion in assets and no external borrowings for the last five years. Now, Tagum Cooperative has a computed Loan Portfolio of P2.695 billion that serves over 160,000 households in coordination and tie up with the Local Government Unit (LGU) that helps and supports in addressing the

## Where Tagum City Is

Tagum is the capital city of Davao del Norte with a total land area of 19,580 hectares which are predominantly agricultural. It produces rice and crops like coconut, Cavendish banana, and other agricultural crops for non-commercial use. It is strategically located at the northern portion of Southern Mindanao and is at the intersection of three major road networks such as the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway, the Davao-Mati-Agusan Road, and the Davao-Bukidnon road. It is bordered by the municipalities of Asuncion, New Corella, and Mawab on the north, Maco on the east, and Braulio E. Dujali on the west. It faces directly the Davao Gulf to the south.





(people's) economic problem and upgrading their social, educational, and health status.

“Today, Tagum Cooperative is among the prime movers of the country's cooperative movement, being one of the leading and most active affiliates of the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO), Mindanao Alliance of Self-help Societies-Southern Philippines Educational Cooperative Center (MASS-SPECC) and Model Credit Network (MCN).”

## Gender and family enrichment

It is interesting to note that TC is also at the forefront of mainstreaming gender in the cooperative movement in Davao del Norte by providing opportunities and protection to women through its Gender and Development and Family Enrichment Program, Savings and Credit with Education (SCWE) wherein 1,707 women availed of P4.2 million worth of loans to finance their livelihood projects.

To underscore the importance of gender in the work of Tagum Cooperative, its Gender Equality Committee held in February 2015 a “Gender Sensitivity Training for Young People.” Fifty-four students from the Tagum City National High School, Tagum Comprehensive National High School, and Assumpta School of Tagum attended.

The training for the youth is designed to “contribute to the personal and social development of the participants for them to understand the importance of gender

equality, gender issues, and gender roles in the family, school, and in the community.”

Under the SCWE program, 70 members of the Tagum Cooperative Women's Livelihood Association Inc. (TCWLAI) were able to augment family incomes after completing their training on meat and food processing and candle making.

One of them, Alma Libranza, has been participating in the SCWE program for three years and says it has helped put her son Alexander through college. “*Meron kaming isang ektaryang palayan pero maliit ang kita kaya nag-tinda rin ako ng RTW (ready-to-wear clothes), kakanin at pagkain sa mga opisina (We have a one-hectare rice farm but it wasn't earning much so I sold RTW, snacks and packed meals in offices),*” she said.

“*Malaking tulong kasi yun credit line ng SCWE tapos meron siya kasamang training kaya matututunan mo ang paraan ng pag-negosyo (The credit line provided by the SCWE is a big help and the training it provides allows you to learn the rigors of doing business),*” Alma added.

But more than the income the program generated for the women, the SCWE also provided opportunities for both women and men members of Tagum Cooperative to break gender barriers.

It is what Normskie Pereyras calls “equalizing the playing field,” given that more than 50 percent of the general membership of Tagum Cooperative are women.

During its 17th Araw ng Tagum celebration in March 2015, the city government named Pereyras the Tagumpay



Excellence Awardee for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

Tagum City Mayor Allan L. Rellon cited Pereyras’ “unparalleled leadership in the country’s foremost cooperative” and how this has helped empower the women in Davao del Norte.

Rellon also noted Tagum Cooperative’s other community development initiatives that complement the city’s own development programs like the Alternative Learning System (ALS)-Balik sa Eskwela Program para sa Out-of-School Youth, the TC-TESDA Scholarship Program, and Five-Year Scholarship programs.

“They (Tagum Cooperative) are very good and very active citizens of Tagum,” said Rellon.

Tagum City is no stranger to awards and the quest for governance excellence.

In 2014, it won the Galing Pook Award for its innovative entrepreneurial initiative called the Night Market Program to further enhance the city’s investment climate while addressing social and environmental issues. That the city LGU and Tagum Cooperative have found resonance in building a conducive climate for social enterprise and community development is perhaps testament to their shared vision of God-centered governance that also places people from all walks of life at its core.

Juris D. Perez, Tagum Cooperative General Manager, describes it as a business philosophy guided by “spirituality and togetherness in the family” that in turn serves a framework for the policy thrusts and operations of the cooperative.

By undertaking education-focused programs Tagum Cooperative also complements the city’s capacity development initiatives implemented through the Night Market’s “Palengkeskwelahan” focusing on informal classes in the wet market through the Department of Education’s Alternative Learning System (ALS).



## Opening opportunities through education

Aileen Charish Maculam, 16, is taking up BS in Computer Engineering while 17-year-old Cherry Mae Maratas is pursuing an AB English degree. They are bright, earnest, and filled with the exuberance of young people about to embark on an interesting journey. It was a journey that they would not have been



able to undertake had they not been selected for the TC Five-Year Scholarship Program.

*“Gusto ko talaga mag-aral pero mahirap lang kami kaya akala ko di na matutupad yun pangarap ko. Then nalaman ng mga magulang ko na members ng TC na meron scholarship program kaya ayun nag-apply sila. (I wanted so much to study but we’re poor and I thought that that would be the end of my dreams. But then my parents, who are both TC members, learned about the program and applied),”* said Cherry.

Aileen and Charish are two of five “deserving but financially deprived students earning a college degree in order to help themselves achieve a secure future as well as help their families” through the scholarship program which also requires that in order to qualify, parents of the scholars should be TC members in good standing for at least five years.

The Tagum Cooperative-TESDA Scholarship Program or Alternative Learning System-Balik Paaralan para sa Out-of-School Adults (ALS-BPOSA), on the other hand, seeks to “extend financial assistance to interested and qualified members and/ or dependents of members in technical-vocational education and training programs.” TESDA stands for Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Leoni Vic Grace Felicilda is the School Alternative Learning System (ALS) Coordinator at the Tagum National Trade School where she helps supervise 116 students under the program.

She said that seeing people who would

otherwise have no other viable option for education taking on the opportunities presented by the TC-TESDA program encourages her to do more despite other work that she does as a regular teacher.

*“Napamahal na sa akin yun program kasi nakita ko kung paano nagkaroon ng motivation yun mga estudyante na ituloy ang pag-aaral nila kahit papaano, kahit may anak na sila o nagta-trabaho o nahihirapan kumita (I love the program because I saw how the students are motivated to learn even if they already have children or are working or finding it difficult to make ends meet),”* said Leoni.

## How the TC community development program works







Tagum Cooperative (TC) believes it is very close to realizing its vision of becoming “the best one stop shop for total member care” because of its programs’ resonance with its members and the larger community.

The cooperative currently has approximately 96,619 members coming from different sectors including the youth.

The Education, Community Development Program (ECDP) Section was created by the TC Board of Directors on the recommendation of the Education Committee (EDCOM) to help the latter in planning and implementing educational, informational, training activities, and other development programs.

These guidelines were also crafted to ensure efficient and effective implementation and monitoring:

1. Outreach activities will be planned by ECDP staff and evaluated by the EDCOM officers based on technical quality, suitability for audiences the programs are designed for and how well they meet the members’ needs, keeping in mind also that it is TC’s vision to help people in need. The planned ideas are then brought to the EDCOM for refinement.
2. Crafting of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on programs requiring such documents.
3. Creation of implementing rules and guidelines on programs and activities for monitoring and evaluation e.g.:
  - a. For scholars (passing grade and other needed requirements)
  - b. For feeding program ( TC finances the program, PTA cooks and feeds)
  - c. For tree planting (coordination between TC, LGU CENRO or City Environment and Natural Resources Office, and Barangay Pandapan)
4. Preparation of monthly accomplishment reports to be distributed to concerned parties (LGUs, Provincial government, BOD, Management, Partners)



## Education, Community Development Program (ECDP) Activities

Activity	Description
Gasa Alang sa Eskwela	Tagum Cooperative (TC) supports the Balik-Eskwela program of the Department of Education through this program wherein TC gives school bags and school supplies to needy and deserving students. Its objectives are: (1) To be able to help less fortunate students of TC partner schools by giving school bags and supplies; and, (2) To inspire students in fulfilling their dreams despite their poverty.
Hot Lunch Plus	TC feels the need to feed the so-called “severely wasted and wasted” students with nutritious food through its Adopt-a-School “Hot Lunch” program that aims to (1) Assist primary schools in their health and nutrition program; (2) Improve the condition of the severely wasted and wasted pupils through a feeding program; (3) Motivate regular attendance of students in schools; and, (4) Develop students’ behavior like socialization, kindness, and cooperation.
Alternative Learning System (ALS)-Balik sa Eskwela Program Para sa Out of School Youth	Tagum Cooperative has joined forces with government institutions to make access to education for out-of-school youth and adults. It aims to: (1) Make education accessible to out-of-school youth and adults; (2) Raise the level of literacy in the community; and, (3) Improve the quality of life of individuals and families.
TC-TESDA Scholarship Program	Tagum Cooperative endeavors to extend financial assistance to interested and qualified members and/or dependents of members in technical-vocational education and programs. TC aims to: (1) Extend financial assistance to marginalized but deserving students in technical-vocational education and training programs; (2) Assist private institutions in their development efforts by assuring a steady supply of enrollees to their course offerings; and, (3) Fill up the skills gaps and job requirements of priority industries and sectors with high employment demand, improving the extent of coverage for quality technical-vocational education and training to the grassroots and encouraging technical-vocational institutions to offer programs meeting in-demand industry requirements.



### Five-Year Scholarship Program

This is TC's vision of providing access to education for young men and women who are intellectually capable but financially deprived to pursue their studies. The program seeks to: (1) Help deserving but financially deprived students earn a college degree in order to help themselves achieve a secure future as well as help their families; (2) Help the trainee acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and desirable working attitudes as an employee through work experiences needed for future employment; (3) Promote self-reliance, motivation, and self-confidence in one's ability to meet the challenges of the future; (4) Develop and discover potential youth leaders in the cooperative movement and in the community; and, (5) Contribute to youth employment while pursuing education by providing the scholars free tuition and miscellaneous expenses renewable every semester.

Normskie Pereyras noted how Tagum Cooperative has also put in place in-house facilities to serve its members such as a function hall for training activities and conferences. It has likewise set up the Himsug Pamilya Program Center to cater to the health needs of its members while providing a safe and comfortable space for nursing mothers.

It has also put up the PaSaDa Booth to make it easier for tricycle driver-members who are enrolled in the Pabilising Savings para sa mga Drivers (PaSaDa) to make deposits or loan payments.

“They just drive up to the booth to either deposit their savings or pay their loans then they just drive off again. It’s easy and convenient,” she said.

In what can only be described as “from womb to tomb services,” TC also has mortuary care for its members at least 18 years old with initial share capital of P500.

Its TC Care Plan and Coop FuneCare programs provide memorial plans on installment basis as well as death care and funeral services.

Looking out from the upstairs bedroom window of the Tagum Cooperative Budgetel, it is not difficult to imagine how the intertwined future of the city and the cooperative will continue to unfold.

As one of TC’s ancillary services, the Budgetel is not simply symbolic of its contribution to the city’s economic and infrastructure development but is also a demonstration of its commitment to the coop members to provide the best of care in the region through affordable but near-luxurious accommodations.





## Epilogue

On a bare patch of land somewhere in Purok Balumo, Barangay San Isidro in Tagum City, a group of persons with disability (PWD) waited patiently for the ceremonies to begin. There was palpable excitement. After all this was going to be the groundbreaking for the livelihood center of the Davao del Norte PWD Association, a dream the group has waited for so long to come true. And on a December day in 2015, it did.

Tagum Cooperative through its Chairperson, signed a deed of donation with the Davao del Norte PWD Association for the construction of the livelihood center and

at the same time turned over bags of cement, galvanized iron roofing, and other materials to jumpstart the building of the center.

Benedicto Sabsal, Vice-President of the association, was visibly choking with emotion and could only manage a few words. *“Ngayon lang natin sila nakita pero sobrang malaki ang ibinigay nilang tulong sa ating buhay at kabuhayan (We have seen them only now but they have extended so much more for our lives and livelihood.)”*

In a sense that is essentially what Tagum Cooperative is all about and why it is reaping praises and awards left and right: it is doing good by others while doing business.

“At the end of the day, there is God in everything that we do as we endeavor to put God in the marketplace,” said Normskie Pereyras.



