



Some 35 families farming in the mountains of Barangay Bunguiao now enjoy an adequate supply of potable water for house and agricultural uses coming from a 45,000-liter ferro-cement tank they built themselves over a 2-year period. The cost of materials was mainly provided by the Zamboanga-Basilan Integrated Development Alliance, Inc. (ZABIDA), through its partner NGO Reach Out to Others Foundation (ROOF), and the funds for the project came from a grant by the Spanish NGO Manos Unidas (MU).

ZABIDA president Fr. Angel Calvo, CMF said during the inauguration of the water system last Saturday, August 23 that the moment is a celebration of the success of the farming families in helping themselves and the project provides them an opportunity for more community development later. During the inauguration, the farmers organization called Immaculate Conception Upland Farmers Association (IUFA) jointly with the Bunguiao barangay council signed a memorandum of agreement with ZABIDA-ROOF maintain the facility. It was witnessed by MU officials Carolina Unzeta and Miguel Carballo, along with almost 200 other guests from local government offices, military, out of school youth, teachers and civil society groups to include ZABIDA partners Peace Advocates Zamboanga and Katilingban para sa Kalambuan, Inc. The visitors made a long trek to reach the isolated sitio, located some 75 kilometers from the city proper.

Aside from the inauguration, the event also marked the third anniversary of ZABIDA'S Financial Service Program (FSP), and this was celebrated through a tree-planting activity in Sitio Pina on the same morning. FSP extends micro-lending to poor borrowers and small businesses in Zamboanga City.

The water tank is the second built by ZABIDA in Bunguiao. The first was built in Sitio Udjung back in 2010 under the MU-Spanish government's Convenio program.

As part of the programme, Joseph D. Ledesma, IUFA- Zamboanga City Chapter President who stood as the emcee welcomed and acknowledged the guests and participants. Fr. Calvo gave an inspiration message, citing how "Agua es Vida" really means, especially to the people who are in the rural communities and far from the reach of the city proper's services.

Bunguiao's Kagawad Leo Resurrection also gave a message wherein he rendered gratitude to ROOF and ZABIDA for the help provided, and for making the water system possible.

Community leader Ledesma said that he is very thankful that the participants were able to reach their rural community even though it is far from the town proper. "Alegre gat kame kay ya pwede ustedes ginda aki, pati ya pwede ustedes mira el di amun sitwastion," Ledesma said.

He also thanked ZABIDA and ROOF for the help extended to them. "Si nuay ustedes ya iskuhi kanamun as beneficiary, nuay este. Grande ayuda gat te kanamun, hinde na kame anda saka

lehos para saka agua,” he shared. “Pwede ya tamen kame prinsipya para na di amun gardening,” he added. He also cited that each resident owns a waterwell but this dries up under the high heat of the sun. “Prikura kame kwida este para kwando . Oh hala, hinde tamen ustedes deskansa ayuda kanamun,” he told ZABIDA.

Other guests included the principal and teachers from Talon-Talon National high School, FSP clients, MYDev students from Brgy. Culianan, Security forces from Task Force Zamboanga and Western Mindanao Command, Office of the City Planning, OCENR, DEPED personnel and CFSI.

Regarding the tree planting, FSP program coordinator Nujom Hadjibata shared that “with the program which is related to business, when you plant a tree, you expect that it will bear fruits, and we see that as a profit.” “When the fruits will be harvested, it will also be shared to others who need them,” she said.

The FSP chose Bunguiao, which was one of the communities ROOF works with and its timely for the Water System Project. The water system needs a watershed. The tree seedlings of 300 mahogany and narra trees were donated by the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) and 200 rubber tree seedlings were from ROOF. (ZABIDA/Karel B. Mellanes)



By Dante Corteza

Deuteronomy 15:11 “For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’”