



Volunteers' Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society

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3 Bliss Project, Notre Dame Village, Cotabato City

Volunteers' Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society Updates

Cotabato City, Philippines





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From small initiatives of voluntary outreach programs in Cotabato City and the adjacent communities, the Volunteers' Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society (+VIBES) was born.

It has been said that the future lies in the hands of the youth.

+VIBES started off as a spark of passion in the hearts of young professionals in Cotabato City longing to give back to their communities.

The learnings and experiences of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute alumni, Lo Ivan Castillon, connected in OPAPP and the founder of VIBES and Abdul Majid Nagamura, also connected in OPAPP and the co-founder shaped them to establish this initiative.

Where it started?

These initiatives started with feeding programs for the Badjao communities and street children of Cotabato City. These young professionals also gave back through engaging the residents in the Bahay Maria, a home for the aged community, in a gift sharing program.

These outreach programs replicated in the Markaz Aytam Orphanage and in the Cotabato City jail as well engagements with the lumad (indigenous people) children in Kusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat Maguindanao.

With the positive responses gained from different stakeholders, the volunteers' hub was organized to provide an avenue for volunteers to become involved in programs that aim to "give back" to the communities. +VIBES envision harmonious co-existent communities towards sustainable peace and development in Mindanao.



What's next?

Vibers, as the volunteers call themselves, take on this big dream for their community in hopes of a sustainable and peaceful Mindanao. They continue to engage the community through outreach programs, psychosocial interventions and facilitating children in a play and other activities.

In +VIBES, we believe that no dream is too big if you break it down and take small steps towards it.



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What we do?

In +VIBES, we believe that in everything we do, Peacebuilding is our ultimate goal. Through the core values of peacebuilding, +VIBES aims to take on its mission through the various mediums, which include:

- Teaching and Sharing Peace
- Strengthening Linkages on Peace Advocacies
- Integrating Peace Education in Institutions
- Promoting Synergy amidst Diversity
- Foster Environmental Stewardship



The volunteers during the planning of the interventions that are aligned with our mediums and programs.

In +VIBES, we aim to give you avenues for your advocacies and a chance to bring your visions to life.

In +VIBES, we believe that all advocacies whether it be on empowerment, environment, as well as education, etc., lead to peaceful and sustainable development in our local communities. No matter what channel we take, we move forward towards our vision of the dream community.

Volunteers' Forum tags the community visioning summit



Volunteers and resource speakers take a pose after the forum

More than 50 participants attended the Volunteers' Forum last 29 September in Schools Division of Cotabato City Hall, Department of Education (DepEd) XII, Rosary Heights 8, 2018. Student Leaders from eleven (11) secondary schools and two (2) from colleges, teachers, volunteers from non-government organizations, health sector, government agencies,



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youth organization, and women sector pledged their commitment to serve and volunteer to bring community change. With the support of the Gather of the Goldin Institute, a Chicago based NGO working on grassroots community change programs and Schools Division of Cotabato City and other stakeholders, this event has become a success.

During the forum, speakers Ms. Leny Labayno from DepEd, Ms. Bea Almoite from SIGAY youth organization and Dr. Susana Anayatin from Goldin Institute shared their experience on volunteerism, servant leadership, community organizing and perks of being service oriented individual. Appreciative Inquiry was highlighted during the forum where students had the interaction to the resource speakers with the moderator. The participant were given also a chance to interview their fellow participants on the assets of the

community they belong. In the Asset Mapping, it was given significant account, the human resources as best asset. It was stressed when the student leaders, teachers and other stakeholders of the community as well as volunteers identify themselves that they can be the one who can work for the positive change they aspire for their respective schools and community. Initial partnership among these participants has been established.

From this forum, a great vision of empowered volunteers, student leaders, teachers and other stakeholders will work for change as volunteers.



Initiatives for street children especially the Badjao

It is most likely that the Badjao community is always left out in the consultation or in policy support of the government. They are usually the nomads roaming around the Cotabato City if we contextualize it in the city where we are. In other cities and municipalities, they are also present in the streets.



The volunteers with the Bajao community in Cotabato City



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It is in the initiatives of the volunteers of +VIBES to consider always the community Badjao in any possible intervention we may have. As to this writing, only feeding program and games we have had.



Along with our mediums, we found out that Respect Education Program is very relevant and timely to be the core of our methodologies. From then on, the founder prepared a proposal that would be in context of the target school of +VIBES.

+VIBES asked also permission from Respect Education Foundation based in The Netherlands last July 2018 to use the concept and mythologies for the activities. Along with this, +VIBES already organized the team to be the respect facilitators/volunteers and personally coordinated with the school principal and teachers to implement such program.

There were positive response from the school to have such program knowing that their school were always the last priority for the program and projects of some other agencies and institutions. It is due to accessibility and poor students' performance. The teachers and the principal were very excited as +VIBES presented the program as well as how it came to the Philippines through Pasali Foundation and Respect Education Foundation.

After series of meetings and discussions, we were able to launch and conduct the workshops of the Respect Education Program wherein the bottom-line of the intervention is inculcate the essence of respect and appreciate diversity.



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Respect Education Program officially launched



The +VIBES Respect Education Program entitled “Enhancing Students’ Participation Through Integration of Respect Education Program to the Learning Pedagogy of Datu Siang National High School Cotabato City” was officially launched on 12 October 2018 in Datu Siang National High School, Cotabato City. Teachers, student leaders, PTCA President and VIBES Volunteers attended the event.



The project envisions in contributing in the improvement of the teaching-learning pedagogical paradigm of the educational system in the Province of Maguindanao. As a methodology, it aims to create a safe environment for school children. It helps the learners understand the meaning of respect and the contribution they can make to their environment. Creative working methods are also applied to develop the learning capacities, skills and multiple intelligences of learners.

The volunteers enjoy the boat ride going to Datu Siang National High School for the launching of REP



The PTCA President, teachers, student leaders and +VIBES volunteers take a photo opportunity after the launching program of Respect Education Program



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This project will also consider the promotion and recognition of the Respect Education Program in the new Bangsamoro Government as an innovative teaching methodology to improving quality education. This approach will be carried out through advocacy and lobbying, and capacity building activities to school children, their teachers and school heads, and parents.

The main goal of the project is to strengthen the quality of education through integration of innovative methodologies.

Basic Understanding of Peace Workshop for Children

In relation to the celebration of National Peace Consciousness Month and International Day of Peace on September 21, the Volunteers' Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society (VIBES) volunteers was invited to conduct Basic Understanding of Peace Workshop to the student leaders



of the Notre Dame Village Central Elementary School, Rosary Heights VIII, Cotabato City.

About 50 student leaders and peace officers participated



the workshop. VIBES produced a document that serves as working guide in conducting Basic Understanding Peace Workshop for elementary level of participants. This was the product of discussions and gathering of relevant and timely materials for the young student leaders and children aged 12 years old and below and intended for 30-50 children or student-leader participants. Most of the activities and methodologies used in the module are Respect in nature.



The workshop was aimed for the student leaders to understand concept peace and conflict or misunderstanding, aware with the issues on peace and conflict, appreciate differences and uniqueness, develop camaraderie among student leaders and identify basic principles of leadership for young leaders.

Volunteer Facilitators enjoy the interaction with the school children Notre Dame Village Central Elementary School



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Indeed, it was a fun filled workshop where children were given a chance to express themselves and enjoy learning through interactive methodologies and friendly environment.

Respect Education first workshop fascinates the school children



The implementation of Respect Education Program to school children of Datu Siang National High School started with the Getting to Know You More, Meet and Greet, and I am Poem Workshops on 13 September 2018 in Datu Siang National High School, Cotabato City. Almost 60 school children participated the workshops which was facilitated by the energetic and positive VIBERS. Teachers and student leaders were also present during the workshop as observers.



The workshops aim to describe and share interesting things about one another and recognize and appreciate individual differences in traits and characteristics among pupils.

Students and volunteers enjoying the activities during the Respect Workshop

The community asset that we have to actualize all these is volunteerism. We don't have the money to fund, but we have friends and volunteers who are willing to give and share.

We look forward also that this November, we will launch SMART (Sports, Music, Arts, Recreation and Technology) youth program. This program aims to bring back the culture of peace advocacy and values formation to the young generation. Also, our group is preparing for the +VIBES Fostering Environmental Stewardship Advocacy using social media including the SUP (Single-Use-Plastic) to selected coffee and tea shops in Cotabato City.



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Other Activities

Monthly Community Service in Bahay Maria Foundation, a home for the aged, sick and abandoned in Cotabato City





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Feeding Program and Play in Markaz Aytam Orphanage, victims of war orphans

