

PROJECT '2016 GUIMARAS ATI HEALERS PLAN'

End Report for Koningsschool Small Grant Fund (KS)

Introduction

KS's support has been critical to sustain the momentum of the initiative of the Ati healers of Guimaras. However, the project had been designed with the expectation that additional funds could be sourced.

Unfortunately, firstly, additional funds turned out to be much harder to come by than foreseen. Secondly, because of bureaucratic constraints beyond the Governor's control, the provinces' earmarked contribution to the project took endless to process and is only at the time of writing about to be released. These funds will now be reserved for follow-up activities in the second half of 2017.

Therefore, early on in the project period it became already clear that we would have to lower the ambitions and should scale down some of the activities – particularly those in relation to the scheduled national symposium (and the related film), as we realized that we would not be able to both successfully prepare for and implement the event on a sufficient scale to become the intended catalyst for a fundamental pro indigenous healing paradigm change in primary health care. In the end, it was decided to reschedule the said symposium and film and to instead focus on meticulous preparation for these endeavors.

Achievements

In view of the project's overall objective of 'strengthening the Ati healing practices and to initiate steps toward safeguarding the resource base of the herbal ingredients used therein', the following was achieved:

1) Toward a collaborative primary health care system

After a successful kick-off planning meeting¹ of the Ati Healers Working Group (AHWG) in June 2016, three informal workshops took place (respectively in September and November 2016 and in May 2017), around herbal remedies; massage techniques to alleviate pain; care for pregnancies, birth and maternal health; shamanistic treatments for culture-specific mental disorders and finally the health advantages of a balanced traditional diet over a menu heavy on industrial foods.

The workshops, taken together, resulted in a significantly better articulation of the Ati's healing system in its multiple aspects.

The progress with the above has been regularly shared with the provincial government with always a positive response. Meanwhile, the country's foremost advocate of mainstreaming

¹ Other in-between meetings for communicating up-dates and for capacity building were facilitated by the project's community organizer (herself an Ati).

traditional medicine, recently expressed his willingness to endorse the cause of the Ati healers of Guimaras. 'Dr. Jimmy', as he is better known, is a former Secretary of the Department of Health and professor of family and community medicine at the UP College of Medicine and is currently president of the Health Futures Foundation.

2) Resource access and conservation

- Two ocular inspections of potential Indigenous Communities Conservation Areas (ICCAs) were conducted, back-to-back with workshops: one in coastal mangrove areas, the other at inland 'bukit' sites in the municipalities of Jordan, Nueva Valencia and San Lorenzo. Almost incredibly, some of these sites, however small and degraded the forests, turned out to be still amazingly rich in terms of the medicinal plant resources that can be found there. Therefore, the case for establishing a mosaic of ICCAs managed by the Ati with the explicit aim of conserving the medicinal plants therein, appears to be substantially stronger than previously thought. (See table 1 for a peek at preliminary results of the inspections.)
- Stake holder dialogue (other than local government) with Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) HQ, Guimaras State University (a promising new contact) and routinely, at the highest level, with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) generally proceeded satisfactory. As for key player DENR, partnership evolved very well during most of the project period. That is, until the open-minded Secretary of the department, Gina Lopez, suddenly got the sack last April: perhaps a great victory for the mining industry, but a serious set-back for environmental and community-based initiatives. We have to see now, how to engage the general who has replaced Mrs. Lopez in the months ahead. (See further below.)

3) Income generation

- Sales promotion of Ati herbal medicines, amulets and craft items in a booth provided by the local government at this year's (May) provincial mango festival: a first time and sales were already pretty brisk. An on-site brainstorm took place on day one of the festival on how to up-scale this window of opportunity next year.
- Inter-tribal trade: the healers have been very proactive, in the framework of the new Negrito umbrella organization (see below), in developing trade relations among the various Negrito groups, concerning procurements of ingredients for herbal medicines.

4) Strengthening of organizational capacity

- Linkaging/Network development: GACA/AHWG has become prominently involved in SPNKK, the newly established national umbrella organization of the Negritos of the Philippines, with one Ati Guimaras healer last November elected into its board, while AHWG has been declared the primary 'learning pilot' on traditional healing' for the entire network.
- Communication: two used laptops, donated by the PhilAm Foundation, which after operational systems and basic software were installed by one of the project's volunteers,

were handed over to two of the most actively involved communities on May 10, 2017 – with instructions on how to use and maintain. The equipments, however old, certainly will make direct communications less cumbersome in the time ahead.

- Finance: guidance has been provided to GACA to the opening of a bank account (a nightmare in the Philippines, certainly for the marginalized segments of society). This will enable the communities to directly receive funding, e.g. from the local government.

Looking Back at Expected Results and Lessons Learned

As mentioned before, things have been moving a bit slower than hoped for and looking back targets set at the beginning may have been quite a bit over-ambitious.

Nevertheless, very good progress has been made in key fields and the AHWG healers are now much more self confident and better positioned for engagement with the medical establishment in the next round.

Next Steps

- Step-up (mostly local) fund raising for follow-up activities. (June 1 – September 15, 2017.)
- Conduct a National Symposium ‘Toward integration of Ati traditional medicine in primary health care’, now targeted for November of this year.
- Produce ‘Healing Hands’ documentary film: idem targeted for November of this year.
- Re-engagement of DENR (through NCIP) on the ICCA issue, will take place as soon as things have somewhat settled down at the department.
- Building on this year’s experience, a much higher profile presentation of the Ati’s healing heritage at provincial and municipal festivals in Guimaras is targeted for the 2nd quarter of 2018.
- Finally, also in 2018, starting in the 1st quarter, full implementation of the outcomes of the ‘National Symposium’, in partnership with cosmopolitan health care facilities in Guimaras and beyond, is foreseen.

Clark, June 7, 2017

Jenne de Beer

On behalf of KAKAI/GACA

Table 1: Sample of medicinal plants found in potential Ati ICCA areas²

Local/common/scientific name	Plant part/ preparation/ traditional uses	Clinical/nonclinical evidence
Salong, <i>Agathis alba</i>	Stems/leaves, boiled: post partum wash of perineum.	...
Madre kakaw*, <i>Gliricidia sepium</i>	leaves boiled: PPW	antimicrobial activity & resolution of scabies
Pasaw, <i>Corchorus olitorius</i>	leaves boiled: PPW; fresh topical: headache	significant (free) radical scavenging activity.
Bunlaw, <i>Justicia gendaruso</i>	leaves boiled: PPW ³ ; leaves fresh on forehead: headache	...
Palotsina*, Akapulko, <i>Cassia alata</i>	leaves squeezed: skin diseases	...
Hagonoy, <i>Melanthera biflora</i>	leaves boiled: clean wounds/skin infections	Significant analgesic property/anti-fungal activity
Pandan, <i>Pandanus tectorius</i>	leaves boiled: urethral infections	...
Tagpo, <i>Ardisia boissieri</i>	stems boiled: stop bleeding/diarrhea; flowers/fruits: vitamin C	...
Hitang-hitang, Batino, <i>Alstonia macrophylla</i>	bark: food poisoning/rabies	...
Lumbuy, duhat, <i>Syzygium cumini</i>	fruit: diabetes/bark: diarrhea	...
Guyabano, soursop, <i>Annona muricata</i>	fruits/squeezed drink: UTIs	Significant anti-oxidant activity
Kanuyong	Bark, mashed: toothache	...
Pitong balat	root boiled: constipation	...
Gulamnyong, <i>Citrus sp.</i>	fruit squeezed: face wash/vitamin C	Anti-scorbutic
Buri, <i>Corypha elata</i>	young shoots crushed: headache, fever	Febrile catarrh
Buknai	fruit juice: orally: diabetes; topical: cleansing of wounds	...
Rosat baybayun, <i>Lochnera rosea</i>	Roots: stomach ulcers, UTIs, high blood pressure	proven effective emmenagogue
Artemisa*, <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Leaves boiled: fever	proven carminative and emmenagogue
Buyo, betel nut, <i>Areca catechu</i>	crushed leaves on throat: tonsillitis	Seeds externally as astringent++
Manga, <i>Mangifera indica</i>	Bark: skin diseases, stop bleeding	Bark astringent; root diuretic
Akit	Leaves: squeeze and apply on stomach: vermifuge	...
Lampoyang, <i>Curcuma zedoaria</i>	roots, as a spice in food: digestive stimulant	...
Panglat*, lemon grass, <i>Andropogon citrates</i>	whole plant in concoctions for high blood pressure and arthritis	...
Cassava, <i>Manihot utilissima</i>	pulped roots in concoctions for back massage	...

² Most of the medicinal plants mentioned here are collected from the wild, while some are derived from cultivated sources in the vicinity of Ati hamlets. Also, most of the plants are native, although quite a few are exotics, incorporated into the Ati pharmacopoeia only in more recent times. The latter are indicated with an asterisk.

³ Commonly used for the purpose in combination with the leaves of one or more other plants, including the aforementioned salong, madre kakaw and pasaw.

Amrona	leaves boiled: drink and topical application: measles	...
Alibhon	Roots boiled and drink concoction: cough	...
Seligon	Leaves: to calm the stomach of babies	...
Maritana	Leaves fresh pounded: skin infections	...
Takinis	Stems: to brush teeth	
Sangkawilan	Stems: mouth infections; fruits: vitamine C	...
Kaluoy	Bark (?): running nose, cough	...
Aluoy	Leaves pressed on head through massage: headache	...
Apatapat	Bark/root (?): boil, drink: fever	...
Casla	Pounded leaves on dislocated bones (after fixing): to reduce swelling.	...

N.B. Final identification and validation is still in progress.

Main References to the table:

Brown, William, 1921. Minor Products of Philippine Forests, Volume III, Manila Bureau of Printing

Galvez Tan, Jaime & Isidro Sia, 2014. The Best 100 Philippine Medicinal Plants, Health Futures Foundation, Quezon City.