

---

## SHARING GOOD PRACTICES <sup>1</sup>

---

### *‘Wired’ Pinoys abroad work with local governments by Perla Aragon-Choudhury*

Filipinos abroad donate bridges, roads and other public infrastructure to their town; concretize their solidarity when disasters strike; and invest what they can in community-based initiatives. Today migrant giving is greatly aided by e-technology, which allows migrant associations to work with government officials back home.

This is one of the highlights from the research on cooperation for development between migrants plus national and local institutions in the Philippines. The study is part of the Migrants’ Associations and Philippine Institutions (MAPID) Project of the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)-Philippines. MAPID focuses on Filipino migrants’ associations in Italy and Spain on the one hand, and Philippine government institutions on the other. The project is supported by a EUR580,230.14-grant under the Aeneas Programme of the European Union. The project was chosen from among the various proposals submitted by different institutions throughout the world.

MAPID was launched in 2008, and the main activity in the past year was the research conducted among Filipino migrants in Italy and Spain, and the parallel research among government agencies in the Philippines. Findings from the research are expected to inform the design of training programs for migrant leaders in Italy and Spain, and key government officials in the Philippines. The training programs will be implemented in the latter part of 2009. In 2010, a series of dissemination activities is planned to share the research and training experiences. The center is cooperating with Fondazione ISMU in Milan, Italy; the University of Valencia, Spain; and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas in carrying out the three-year initiative.

SMC director Fabio Baggio explains why MAPID focuses on local governments: “The concern regarding the migration-development nexus is rarely present at the level of local government units (LGUs) – which play a role in channeling to local communities the contributions of Filipinos abroad to the development of the Philippines.”

---

<sup>1</sup> This feature story was prepared as part of the MAPID Project’s objectives to share findings, especially good practices, to a broader audience. For more information about the MAPID Project, please contact the Scalabrini Migration Center – tel/fax. 7243512 and 7214296 or by email: [smc@smc.org.ph](mailto:smc@smc.org.ph).

### *Luzon: Good governance and good quality of life for Oasnon*

The research in the Philippines has uncovered several case studies showing how e-technology may come before or after a migrant association has partnered with an LGU to promote local development. In the case of Amus na Kita Oasnon (ANKO), it was the technology which came later.

Ateneo de Naga's Cristina Lim documents how ANKO began on May 6, 2005 when Oas, Albay parish priest Fr. Jerry Manlangit led a forum, supported by the local government, with Greg Conde and other *balikbayans*.

The ANKO members later identified problems impeding progress - poor governance, inefficient administration and the lack of direction, discipline and leadership – and then dialogued with the LGU about transparency in transactions.

They now have officials reporting regularly on the state of the town (*Ulat Bayan*); issuing a related publication called *Bandillo*; and undertaking infrastructure for development such as farm to market roads, the renovation of the public market and the municipal hall, and a resolution moving upland the town dumpsite.

Today, ANKO has projects in health, education, livelihood, arts and culture. To all these projects, it invites the local government, which listens to its suggestions and implements what it can.

ANKO also makes available the know-how for quality and results-oriented leadership, and promotes transparency, accountability and decentralization of functions for a timely response to the needs and concerns of remote communities of Oas.

ANKO further ensures good governance by putting up in 2007 a website called Participatory Governance in the Internet Age (PGIA): Linking Progress with Responsible and Effective Leadership. In this World Bank-approved project, Oasnon here and abroad can post updates as well as comments on their town.

The website also popularizes and accepts donations for the very first project of Greg Conde, who was elected ANKO president, on memorabilia, stories, pictures and letters about the Oasnon way of life. To be built by \$100 or P5,000 each from 1,000 families, it is aptly named "Foundation 1000: Oas Quadricentennial Library Museum."

How is cyberspace used? For one, it was an ANKO member in America who emailed to propose the Oas Micro-Fund against hunger and poverty where members are encouraged to donate at least \$50. Also, another member over there used his own time and money to research on micro credit and to reach people and organizations doing it. .

### *Visayas: E-learning and e-governance in Ormoc*

The Ormoc E-Learning and Research Center began when Manuel Baylon, now a US citizen based in Phoenix, Arizona visited his home city in 2006 and saw how students, more so those in public schools, knew little about information technology.

Alan Feranil of the University of San Carlos-based Office of Population Studies reports that Baylon sent money for computers, printers, routers and other vital equipment, and worked with Ormoc City Mayor Eric Codilla, a friend, together with the Planning Department of the Office of the Mayor to start the project.

Sheila Rose Ortega, e-center manager, says that daily, she and the six contractual staff serve 60-70 students attracted by the free Internet and free printing of materials.

Conveniently based in the second floor of the city market, they also draw other citizens attracted by easy access to on-line transactions, data about Ormoc, updates on ordinances, and information about other services.

This kind of access is mandated by Provincial Ordinance No. 136 - An Ordinance Establishing the Ormoc City Community E-Learning and Research Center (CeL-RC) and for Other Purposes – which also tasks the mayor and other city officials in the Board of Trustees to supervise the center, administer its funds, and receive donations to it.

For sustainability, the same ordinance also provides that the center will continue changes in administration, which is also provided for in the ordinance itself.

And for more the city government has also signed with Baylon a memorandum of agreement continue the e-center to the same effect.

### *Mindanao: Bansalan citizens and their government*

The most prominent linkage with the local government in Davao Region is in Dansalan, Davao del Sur. Chona Echavez of Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro, was told at the Municipal Planning and Development Office, “In June 2004 the Association of Bansaleños Worldwide (ABW) established a website to provide information such as updates and profiles to Bansaleños around the world. There has been no fund needed, except the skills in website design...”

The creator of [www.bansalan.com](http://www.bansalan.com) is Fullerton, California-based Edwin Bibera, one of the 90 members in the virtual community in the Philippines and in Asia, Europe Australia, Canada and the United States.

Though it is not the official website of the municipality, it is now the meeting place in the Internet of Bansaleños around the world. Leila Rispens-Noel, ABW president, writes in a book published by SMC-Philippines entitled **Moving out, Back**

**and Up:** “The website and the Internet are extremely important to ABW to maintain close contacts with the members and to assure accountability for the projects.”

Rispens-Noel recalls that when members began the “Give Back Campaign: Renovate ABC Gym” project in 2006, they signed a memorandum of agreement with the municipal government to provide labor and they, the construction materials.

The partnership continued in December 2007 with ABW’s first grand reunion of 50 Bansaleños from abroad, their families and friends. It was fully supported by newly-elected Mayor Edwin Reyes, the councilors, and local volunteers.

“[The] mayor presented plans for Bansalan like eco-tourism and marketing locally-based products like organic coconut sugar,” Rispens-Noel writes. “He encouraged the ABW to support the plans of the town, and the ABW agreed to help spur development.”

For academic year 2008-09, the ABW supports 84 elementary school children and two high school students in six government schools. Some members, according to Dr. Echavez, help even more by buying the crafts bags made from recycled materials by the parents of scholars, selling them in Japan and earning some income in the process.

Migrant giving helps but it cannot take the place of government, Rispens-Noel also says: “The ABW expects the local government to take the lead and show commitment to realize the goals. Members ... still believe that it is the primary task of the local government to initiate any development plan.”

And so, where is MAPID here?

“We hope to help strengthen the capabilities of the government to link migration with development and stress anew its accountability for transparency,” replies Maruja Asis, research and publications head at SMC Philippines. #