

UUPCC (Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council)  
International Development, Community, and Environment  
Clark University

**Trip Report for Richard Ford (rford@clarku.edu)  
Visit to Negros Island, The Philippines**

15 — 30 March 2011

I had four goals in traveling to The Philippines:

- Meet with leadership of the Banaybanay UU church to apprise them of the goals and possible outcomes of a community planning exercise;
- Meet with leadership in Nagbinlod to learn of recent activity there;
- Conduct a training course for nine Unitarian Universalist leaders from across the island in order to build capacity to facilitate community workshops within the UUCP;
- Conduct a planning workshop in the village of Ulay in cooperation with the San Mateo (California) UU church.

While in the Philippines I met with:

**UUCP**

Rev. Rebecca Quimada Sienes, President of UUCP

Rev. Nihal Anton Attanayake, Chair of the UUCP Faith in Action Program

Rev. Elvira P. Sienes, UUCP (superb interpreter for workshop)

Efram Piera, Accountant (and escort for me during the first few days of the visit)

**Trainees in Workshop**

Rev. Jovevani E. Española, Banaybanay

Gina Lumeran, Consauro

Rey G. Minasalvas (Rey), Ulay

Vicente Ursula, Malingin B.C.

Rosemarie Q. Ponsica, Caican

Rev. Tirso V. Ponsica (observer), Caican

David L. Rago, Nataban

Wenefredo A. Vivar (Nonoy), Nagbinlod

Myrnalyn V. Caballero, (Lyn), Cansayan/Aquino

Efram G. Piera, UUCP

Marife C. Belimac (Peng), Samoyaw

## **Banaybanay**

Rev. Jovani E. Española, UUCP Minister  
Regina Siwagan, President of the UUCP church  
Tony Española, Barangay Councilor and Chair of the Church Board  
Aiza Española, Church Treasurer  
Rosemary Cortez, Secretary of the Church Women's Association  
Charlyn Nacionales, member of the church  
Adelina Ogaptis, member of the church  
Lucia Dalmacio, member of the church  
Veronica Cortez, member of the church and wife of the former minister  
Susan Española, wife of Tony and member of the church

## **Santa Catalina Municipality and Barangay of Nagbinlod**

Nathaniel M. Electona, Vice Mayor, Santa Catalina

## **Ulay Sitio, Prosperidad Barangay**

Rev. Borromeo Cayab, Minister, Ulay UUCP Church  
Rev. Rogelio Lopez, Minister, Ulay UUCP Church  
President Bonifacio Villejo, President of the UUCP Church  
Rey Minasalvas, church member and facilitator for the workshop

## **San Mateo Delegation from the US**

Rev. Vail Weller, UU Minister, San Mateo  
Carol Cook, Chair, San Mateo PCC Committee  
Susan Grieger  
Duane Thompson  
Homer Eaton  
Charles, Barbara, and Emily Du Mond  
Lori Fox  
Reeba Lynn

### **1. Possible Planning Workshop in Banaybanay**

Banaybanay is 30 kms into the mountains from the regional city of Bayawan. It is a community of 700 registered voters — about 400 households. The ride is majestic, starting with the level coastal plane with rich fields of rice, sugar cane, and various fruit trees. After 15 or 20 minutes the road begins to rise and soon is fully enveloped by twisting curves, sharp hill slopes, and breathtaking mountain vistas. After 40 minutes a small market center appears and a right turn opens the final leg of the trek to Banaybanay. Now the road is rough, with many deep ruts and muddy stretches that challenge even the best of motorcycle drivers. Farms are

close to the road, animals abundant. Many small farms dot the landscape. Most of the traffic on the road is motorcycles and large 10 to 15 ton sugar cane trucks. What a delightful introduction to Banaybanay as it is an authentic Filipino farming community.

We arrive in the village and go first to the UU church. It is small, well looked after, and welcoming. No one there. So we go back a bit to the home of Rev. Jovevani E. Española, the UU minister. We find Tony Española, Aiza and all the others noted on page 2. Conversation swirls between English and Cebuano, children come in and out of the house, an occasional rooster crows, and pigs bellow from a large pen next door. (They were hungry). We are now part of Banaybanay. There is no question that this is a resilient and energetic farm village.

The agenda is to discuss whether Banaybanay should conduct a community planning workshop with its recently organized church partner, the UU church of Appleton, Wisconsin. This is the church of Lee Boeke Burke who has been energetically organizing UUPCC tours of Negros Island for the last few years. We discussed what would be involved in such a workshop. Fortunately, Rev. Española would be coming to Dumaguete for a training program in techniques of facilitating planning workshops.

We discussed what would be involved. First I mentioned that the workshop would be community-wide, not just for UUs. Tony thought this was a good idea and noted that all 11 of the village's churches get along quite well. I described briefly how the workshop in Nagbinlod in 2003 had enabled them to introduce many community improvements.

The conversation turned to the needs and how the planning workshop might energize action on some of their priority issues. Several said their greatest need was to renovate their antiquated water system. Installed several years ago, the tank was no longer large enough to meet village needs. We listened as they described options to upgrade their water access.

The road was also an issue. The ruts intimidate all but the bravest of souls. After a heavy rain (we were lucky to get in and out without any rain) the road becomes impassible. There is also need to upgrade their health center.

While a few other issues were mentioned, the conversation came back to water. They have an existing system. About 100 of the village households have direct connections bringing the water into their homes. The other 300 households collect their water from the numerous standpipes throughout the village.

#### **Churches of Banaybanay**

Of the 11 churches, the Catholics are the largest and UUs the second largest. Of the seven councilors on the Barangay Council for Banaybanay, five are Catholic and two are Unitarian-Universalist. Other village churches: Convention Baptist, Southern Baptist, Voice of Zion, Christian Fellowship, Seventh Day Adventist, Four Square. The Catholics have no full-time priest so one comes from Banaybanay about once a month to celebrate mass, communion, and other formal ceremonies for the church.

The source is small as is the storage capacity of their tank. The system runs about two hours each day and then stops because the tank is empty. There are other sources farther away — they need a water engineer to assess these sources and make recommendations about options. There already is a water user association — Banaybanay Water System Association (BaBWSA) and discussions about water are well underway.

There was high enthusiasm for a planning workshop. I will try to measure the level of interest in the US and get back to the Banaybanay leadership. We then had a pleasant lunch and listened to the stories of what was happening in the village. Life is not dull in Banaybanay. I said that I knew Lee quite well and would pass on to her the interest of the community in a workshop. This would be an easy task, especially given Lee's active involvement in Negros UU activities. I will send a formal note to Cathy Cordes (Executive Director of the UUPCC) and Lee relaying the request of Banaybanay to hold a participatory planning workshop sometime within the next 12 months

One sad note emerged a few days after our visit. Aiza, part of our luncheon meeting and treasurer of the Banaybanay UU church was pregnant. She had a miscarriage a few days after my visit and lost her baby. Her father was so distressed at the news that he had a stroke and died the following day. The double tragedy has cast a shadow of grief on the usually robust community of Banaybanay. We extended our condolences to the family and to the community at this time of sadness.

The planning workshop is a strong possibility. I will follow through with Cathy Cordes at the UUPCC office in the US to see what needs to be done to make this a reality.

## **2. Visit to Nagbinlod**

The planned visit to Nagbinlod never took place. A huge disappointment. My hope was to visit the barangay captain as well as Normi and other leaders to learn of their progress and, more importantly, how they were doing with their most recent water expansion plans. Nagbinlod will be a prominent feature in a narrative I am preparing on how villages can help themselves. It will document several case studies such as the miracle of Nagbinlod. I was also unsuccessful in seeing the Mayor of Santa Catalina as he was away at a three-day workshop.

A short note on the Nagbinlod situation will be of interest. I arrived in Santa Catalina (the municipality of Nagbinlod) on Friday, March 18, with a prearranged appointment to see Mayor Leo Lopez. He had been instrumental in getting Nagbinlod started on their initial water project in 2003. In spite of the appointment, he was out of town. We met instead with Vice Mayor Nathaniel Elektona. He explained that an incident near Nagbinlod the previous day had caused the army to close Nagbinlod to all visitors. He said it would not be possible for me to go to the village.

The “incident” was a shoot-out between the army garrison based in Nagbinlod and the “rebels” who have been living in the hills for at least 20 years. It was not clear how the shoot-out started. What was clear was the result: two “rebels” killed and one wounded and taken into custody. The event was the lead story on the national news and suddenly elevated Nagbinlod to a near-celebrity status. The news was very fuzzy on detail so it is not clear whether those killed were actually part of the dissident group in the hills or simply innocent folk caught up in someone else’s struggle. Of additional interest is that the official named to investigate the incident is Rebecca Sienes’ eldest son. He is a naval officer who knows the area well because he spent much of his childhood in the village. It is indeed a small world.

I was able to get some detail the following week at the facilitator’s workshop from Wenefredo A. Vivar (Nonoy), Normi’s brother. He also lives in the village and enrolled in the workshop. He indicated that investigations were continuing but that little detail was available, even to the people of the village. It was indeed a tragedy that the event took place and, for me, an especially big disappointment as I was unable to meet with the leadership. We did try to contact the barangay captain to see if she might be able to come down the 10 km hill and meet with us. We learned that the next day (Saturday) was the Nagbinlod fiesta and that all attention in the village was focused on preparation of food, decorating, and planning events for the celebration. She was fully engaged in the plans and organizing for the festival. As far as I know the fiesta was a huge success, in spite of the tragedy just a few days earlier.

The shooting incident raises several issues for Nagbinlod. While the dissidents have been in the hills for some time, things recently had been quiet. It is not clear what provoked the incident and whether it will have any longer term impact on the village’s progress. It is clear that their new water system is now underway, although they still do not have all of the money they will need. It is equally clear that the source — a spring-fed lake high up in the hills — is in the middle of the territory where the dissidents roam and that recent events may bring at least a temporary halt to development of the new source. Time will tell! I should add that Nonoy was optimistic that the incident would not have a long term negative impact on the project.

### **3. Capacity Building Facilitator's Workshop**

The following week I conducted a workshop to train facilitators in the community capacity building process. We were twice blessed, first in that Eileen Higgins’ new handbook was ready and even more important, that we had a splendid translation of the handbook in Cebuano, the local dialect of Negros Oriental. The translation included all of the diagrams and figures as well as the complete text. It also included the daily instruction sheets (not bound in the original English version of the handbook) so it was of huge assistance in conducting the workshop.

We worked hard for three days and concluded with awarding of certificates of completion. The group (see listing on page 1) was lively, prompt, and meaningful. Participants stayed over-



*Above, Rey Minasalvas reviews the newly translated handbook as he leads a small group session to analyze Ulay's highest priority problems; Right, Marife Belimac (Peng), leads a group discussion about trends in key sectors over the last 20 years in the community. Both participated in the training program held the previous week.*



*The picture speaks for itself!*

night in the UUCP offices and we took all of our meals there so it was an efficient, compact, and productive time.

The first morning I used a PowerPoint based on ones that Eileen had previously prepared. Elvie Sienes did an exemplary job of simultaneous translation. The PowerPoint set the stage by providing an overview and core goals of capacity building. Several in the group were familiar with the process though not necessarily fully trained in the goals and techniques. Further, Elvie has conducted several workshops herself so she was not translating line by line but, instead, chunk by chunk. Discussion was strong and interest substantial. We then went through half a dozen exercises, discussing the rationale for each exercise as well as the mechanics of presentation. The only slow point was when we tackled the pairwise ranking. We had set up the priorities to be those of the UUCP and were working with options including budget, facilities, paid ministers, etc. Even though all participants were members of the UUCP, only two were ministers. The lay members of the group were not engaged in or familiar with some of the issues of the UUCP and as a result did not find it to be a vital or vibrant topic. We succeeded in generating awareness of the tool but did not come out with a meaningful set of conclusions as we might have done had there been some other theme that was of vital and relevant interest to everyone. While the exercise was successful in teaching the skills, it did not have the vitality and relevance that it does when one is using it in a community. I should add that those who participated in the Dumaguete training and were then involved in the Ulay community planning workshop later in the week (see below) had learned their lessons well and the pairwise ranking was the highlight of the Ulay workshop — facilitated entirely by four of those in the training seminar.

The Dumaguete training provided opportunities for every member of the group to facilitate at least a portion of one exercise and to become familiar with techniques of leading group exercises. We also had time to reflect on the rationale for using particular exercises and to discuss the role of facilitator as “cheerleader” rather than lecturer. This lesson too worked well in Ulay as noted below as well as in the Ulay Case Study, “Working Together Solving Problems: Setting Priorities for the People of Ulay Village, Negros Island, The Philippines.”

#### **4. Ulay Community Planning Workshop**

The primary goal of the visit was to lead the Ulay community planning exercise. Ulay is a small village (700 registered voters) in a remote cluster of hills about 20 kms from San Carlos City in the northeast of Negros Island (Occidental Province). A case study describes the workshop in great detail and will be available on the UUPCC website in the next week. This section touches only on the highlights and accomplishments as well as draws heavily on the last few pages of the case study.

The Ulay workshop was, in part, phase 2 of the training workshop but also a free-standing event. Ten UUs from San Mateo, Ulay’s partner church, came along (names on page 2) and

added substantially to the stature of the program. While language kept most of the U.S. group out of direct action during the formal program sessions, they were highly effective in interacting during breaks and after the sessions closed down. Their presence indicated their willingness to be a supportive element in the mix of solving local needs.

The formal agenda was to conduct a participatory planning workshop so that the two partners could work together to create and eventually implement a community action plan. Four of those in the Dumaguete training program served as facilitators for the Ulay workshop: Rey G. Minasalvas; David L. Rago; Myrnalyn V. Caballero (Lyn); Marife C. Belimac (Peng). Highlights of the workshop included:

- An excellent turnout of 60 adults (and lots of children) for each of the four sessions
- Superb planning and organization, due largely to Nihal coming up on several occasions to make local arrangements and orient the community about what to expect
- Stellar performance from the newly-minted facilitators. The Cebuano version of Eileen's new handbook was the "new gospel" for them and they put it to constant and effective use
- Small groups were active and focused, largely due to the good facilitation
- Ranking was efficient and consensus achieved on every decision box
- Action plans are realistic with two of the highest priorities (water and electricity) set as first needs to be addressed with roads and income generation to be part of the next generation (the ranking matrix appears on page 9)
- Follow up discussions with San Mateo productive with commitments for back up support (translating case study into Cebuano; providing small money to enable village leadership to travel to San Carlos City, Nagbinlod, and other relevant locations)
- Clear indications of a long range commitment on the part of both San Mateo and Ulay to work together to follow through to implement the plan

The critical exercise in planning workshops is the Pairwise Ranking. Ulay's document appears on the next page. The priorities are decisions that have the endorsement of every member of the meetings. There was no voting — another hallmark of the process. Instead all decisions were made by consensus. This becomes vital when it comes time for implementation and there is need for village support, assistance, resources, and related local help. An annex repeats the last pages of the case study, noting recommended actions they may wish to take. Both the people of San Mateo and Ulay should consider these steps as a place to start.

Solving problems is not a magic or mysterious process. It is, instead, the application of knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the situation. Unfortunately, Western technology and culture have created an environment of money as the solution to all problems. This thinking has penetrated deeply into the developing world. How does the West solve problems? With money. But Ulay essentially has no money. Other than begging or engaging in shoddy political manipulation, Ulay has little hope of getting money. But money is not the only way to solve a problem. While money will be part of the solution, the community also has a great deal to offer. The workshop has made at least some of the Ulay leadership aware of their internal strengths and resources. It has also dramatized for the San Mateo community that they have played and can continue to play a vital role in helping Ulay learn how they can access resources that are already available to them. Some are within their community. Some are available through local sources. Still others are international agencies such as Rotary International. Development is about growth in knowledge and well-being. Partnerships are also about growth, including both knowledge and well-being. The ideal situation for a partnership is for both parties to share a common goal and work together to meet it.

In the case of Ulay, the first two priority goals are an improved water system and electricity. It is now time to start. Annex A is taken from the case study about the Ulay planning exercise and offers specific steps of things that can be done. It is offered here as an example of how a partnership can work.

### Ranking of Needs in Ulay

Needs	W	E	ED	R	SCH	MD	I	#	Rank
<b>Water</b>		W	W	W	W	W	W	6	1
<b>Electricity</b>			E	E	E	E	E	5	2
<b>Education</b>				R	ED	ED	I	2	5
<b>Road</b>					R	R	R	4	3
<b>School</b>						MD	I	0	7
<b>Medicine</b>							I	1	6
<b>Income Generation</b>								3	4

### Ranked Order: Ulay

1. Water	5. Education
2. Electricity	6. Medicine
3. Road	7. School
4. Income Generation	

**ANNEX A: Suggestions to Get Started on Water and Electricity**  
(an extract from the Ulay case study)

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusions and Lessons Learned**

There are several lessons learned and recommendations about next steps.

**The process works!** Engaging community groups with systematic and competently managed planning exercises brings communities together and creates a good working relationship that cuts across age, education, social class, gender, religion, and even politics. What the people have in common is their community and the quality of life it can support. They have nothing to lose by investing time and energy in such basic issues as the priorities identified in this planning exercise. This was certainly the case in Ulay.

**Planning taken seriously.** The community clearly thought about their choices and selected serious options. While the access road is a major undertaking, the other three are manageable, assuming they are pursued only one or two at a time. The facilitators think that the place to start would be a two fold focus: water and electricity. Water is mostly a technical need and will definitely require expert advice before starting any work. There are four components to the water need, as noted in the action plan: (1) testing and, as needed, rectifying the quality and health issues of the source; (2) a safe storage system, most likely with a tank of sufficient size and carefully sealed with waterproof cement on the inside; (3) a delivery system, probably of some type of plastic pipe — preferably buried at least six inches under the soil to protect the pipe from damage — and standpipes at convenient locations. The delivery system may involve a pump though the ideal situation is a gravity arrangement so as to save money on maintenance; and (4) a management system, preferably a village water user association that collects small fees so as to have funds for maintenance, a fee structure that is enforced so that all users share in the cost of its operation, and an enforcement capability to expel members who abuse or take advantage of the system. There are many models of such associations. One that has been working smoothly for the last seven years is in Nagbinlod in Santa Catalina Municipality (Negros Island). It would be a good idea if one or two from Ulay were to pay a visit to Nagbinlod and look at both the technical and managerial arrangements they have devised. The people of Nagbinlod would be more than happy to help.

Electricity is a fully different matter. It involves meetings with the electric company and the San Carlos City municipality that has funds designated for expansion to rural communities. It would be a very good idea for Ulay to invite a representative from the electric company to come to a village meeting and explain the cost of BOTH installation of the system as well as the monthly bills that will be charged for the service. While electricity is a wonderful asset for any community, it is not free and the village needs to know what the short term and long term costs will be.

Both the water system and the electrical installation are within reach. There appears to be sufficient capability in the community to manage both. A proposal for a sharing of costs and construction between the barangay and the community would be a place to start, along with searching for NGOs or other organizations that fund water projects. San Mateo can help on this latter need, thus making a partnership among the village, the barangay, the local water department, the San Mateo group, and possibly an NGO for technical and financial help.

The electricity is more of a political need and can be accomplished with persistence and political wisdom. The funds are available within the San Carlos City budget. What is less clear is how and to whom those funds will be allocated. Ulay is now armed with an action plan that documents that the entire community supports the need for electricity. Armed with this plan, Ulay leadership can enter into discussions with the confidence that the people support what they are seeking. Self-confidence is half the battle in such negotiations.

**Committee structures.** Ulay already has several village groups, church groups, and local associations. Local leaders need to hold meetings to determine whether they should form new development management committee(s) that draw on the strength of existing committees or establish sub-committees of existing groups that are focused specifically on a single task — in this case, water and electricity. The choice is up to the community.

**Meeting with the Barangay Council.** Early in the implementation stage, a small group of Ulay leaders should think about meeting with the Barangay Council and discussing the findings and recommendations of the workshop. They should review the community's short term goals, noting that they are not expecting the Barangay to pay for all of it. Rather, they should enlist the help of the Barangay Council to provide some funds but to work with the village committees to obtain additional support from the municipality and provincial sources as well as some of the possible NGO sources noted above. There are funds available from these groups — but whether any of those funds will find their way to Ulay depends on the energy, diplomacy, and persistence that Ulay can offer. The key to remember here is partnerships!!! If travel to and from some of these meetings involves transportation expense or if there are other planning costs, San Mateo might be able to help to provide a small planning budget for the village committees. Finally, it will be important to keep the Barangay Council informed at all times of the plans and opportunities being discussed.

In closing, keep in mind that the priority list includes other needs, especially the road and the income generation. Be realistic about how much a small community can do at one time. Water and electricity have the endorsement of the village as the highest priorities; these two are attainable although it will take considerable work on the part of committees. It is not a good idea to get four or five committees going at the same time. Set goals, pace the work, and when the water system is finished — perhaps a year from now — then think again about the road, the income generation, and perhaps other needs that may have arisen. Ulay is a strong community with good leadership. The plan gives the leadership confidence in implementing the selected needs. The workshop organizers look forward to hearing about your progress.

**ANNEX B: List of Attendees**  
(Ulay Capacity Building Workshop)  
(44 of the 60 who attended)

Marites Abelo	Jennelyn Mamac
Trodes Gimpawan	Remegea Mamac
Helen Minasalvas	Aires Abelo
Peter Belando	Marcing Gimpawan
Virginia Belando	Angelica Lopez
Jenny Casquejo	Rosana Lacumba
Nena Villejo	Maryjoy Abelo
Bonifacio Villejo	Evengelyn Bustilo
Dionesia Abelo	Jorrelyn Sumiga
Jerryboy Lopez	Maryjane Lopez
Rev. Rogelio Lopez	Anabelle Lopez
Thelma Lopez	Rey Minasalvas
Joerey Sumiga	Jocelyn Labandero
Luciano Recana	Celedonio Labandero
Leonela Abelo	Josephine Mamac
Dionesia Pacatang	Leamma Belza
Anisita Tangayan	Alejandro Loqueloque
Neverly Delioraio	Alejendra loqueloque
Vita Angere	Marjorie Suspente
Brenda Paderna	Nila Abelo
Rosemarie Lauriano	
Lizel Cabedo	
Madelyn Lopez	
Jason Mamac	