

# University–Community Outreach as an Enabler for Integral Human Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

This article examines how university–community outreach was an enabler for integral human development during the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative information about the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) Community Outreach Program (COP) is described and analyzed. In particular, the Kabagis Aeta Projects succeeded in its initial implementation, moving from distribution of goods to capability building. It has improved family living conditions and instilled positive work values among the Aetas of Castillejos, Zambales, Philippines. The interventions served as enablers of integral human development in personal, economic, social, ecological, and spiritual life. Beyond physical, structural interventions and resources, values formation was integrated to achieve integral human development. Structures furnished through the COP—the study center, livelihood workshop, and training center—provide venues for trainings and continuous learning for the Aetas. Possible clients or markets can also be explored to absorb the products and outputs of their newly learned skills.

*Keywords: community outreach, integral human development, sustainability, COVID-19 pandemic*



**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the world in the first quarter of 2020, the Philippines ranked high in the number of cases and deaths from 2020 through 2021. There were sudden lockdowns of public and private institutions and establishments, including schools and transportation. As a result, unemployment and poverty escalated and the needs of communities increased. While the entire Philippines was undergoing different types of quarantine modes and people were getting used to new terms such as “contact tracing,” “social distancing,” and “protocols,” universities had to face the challenges brought about by the disruptive events that took place from 2020 through 2022. The University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) took this as a challenge to calibrate its new strategies for quality online educa-

tion, including community outreach.

UA&P refused to be silenced by the pandemic. The voice of our humanity is strong and resilient. We acknowledge that “The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others” (Albert Schweitzer). Guided by our motto, “Unitas,” the university persists in being the innovator, the pioneer, the trailblazer that it is.

Therefore, we considered this time of prolonged COVID-19 pandemic an opportunity to serve our academic community and beyond. The university took on more aggressive community outreach, extending beyond the borders of its location in Pasig City. As a university, its strength lies in the university students, professors, and everyone who comprises the academe, who were dispersed to the different regions due

to lockdowns and travel restrictions.

This article examines how the UA&P Community Outreach Program (COP) can be an enabler for integral human development with the following objectives: (1) Determine the strengths, opportunities, support, and constraints that affect community life; (2) describe the UA&P COP and its effects on the beneficiaries; and (3) explore ways by which integral human development and sustainability can be achieved through UA&P COP.

### The University Responding to Community Needs

Community life is a complex social condition that involves economic, political, religious, social, cultural, and other aspects of human life. It is composed of people who vary in age, sex, family, education, beliefs and convictions, and responsiveness to change. Community development is a process whereby various participants such as government, nongovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, private organizations, and corporations either work together or independently to address community economic, social, political, and other needs. Some examples of community needs that are addressed in the Philippines have been identified by CISAustralia (n.d.): developing and offering social welfare services for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds; teaching or teacher assistance at a local school, including teaching English; assisting with community nutritional programs; and assisting with community center projects, among others.

There have been development initiatives for Aetas in different parts of the Philippines. In October 2011, the Asian Development Bank Regional Capacity Development Technical Assistance Program reported, “targeted capacity building for mainstreaming Indigenous peoples concerns in development was conducted” (Plant & Young, 2011, p. 22). In addition, the Indigenous Peoples in Agriculture established the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), which is responsible for formulating sustainable development plans for ancestral domains. These agencies “apply safeguards for indigenous peoples . . . at both the project level and . . . development planning” (Plant & Young, 2011, p. 22).

Information about the communities where the project will intervene, the social structures of those communities and the families

who live there, their social safety nets, and so on, is essential to projects for Indigenous peoples. Relevant topics include information about livelihoods, economic structures, and how people ensure fulfillment of their basic human needs; beliefs and cultural identities that affect people’s decisions and choices (ethical); and physical environments, resources, and the places in which people conduct their activities (Schoonmaker, 2008). In a study measuring the impact of community outreach, which they call “extension programs,” initiated by higher education institutions, Llenares and Deocarís (2018) used the Community Outcome Scale (COS) to measure the perceived changes in the knowledge, attitude, and lifestyle of the respondents based on the extended education-training programs (p. 46). They found that responsiveness of the community is key to the success of the programs. “Sustainability of community extension programs does not depend entirely on sponsors and funders, but mainly on the responsiveness of the community and the stakeholders’ approach towards community empowerment through the actions of the delivering institution” (p. 51).

Erickson (2010) claimed there is a lack of research about the impacts of service-learning in the community. Impacts on the community have been “largely undocumented,” and the community “is a constituency without a voice in academia and therefore has not been heard” (p. 16). As for methodology, the complexity of community life poses a challenge to research methodology. “It is impossible to control for all of the variables that can confound a research study” (Erickson, 2010, p. 9), including socioeconomic status of residents, demographic factors, cultural background of the community, the community’s age and history relative to community development projects, community cohesiveness, and other traits. These variables make generalizability difficult, if not impossible, to establish (p. 10).

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, university-community outreach activities were put on hold. When these activities slowly resumed, they were greatly changed by controlled human behavior and disrupted operation and functions.

The UA&P COP was led by this author and her family before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our initiatives were recog-

nized on April 30, 2022 in celebration of the International Good Deeds Day, when the author was awarded the UA&P Salt and Light “Lighting a Way Through Excellence” for the Kabagis Aeta Projects, recognizing “her admirable efforts in responding to a need/cause and promoting the goodness of humanity through acts of mercy, kindness and compassion” (University of Asia and the Pacific, 2022).

### Outreach Activities Toward Integral Human Development

Development activities through university–community outreach programs can best be implemented toward integral human development. Development programs, “if they are to be adapted to individual situations, need to be flexible; and the people who benefit from them ought to be directly involved in their planning and implementation” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, §47). To this, we add monitoring and evaluation as tools toward sustainability. In the 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI introduced the concept of integral development: Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man (Pope Paul VI, 1967). More recently, Pope Francis (2017) stated that development projects for Indigenous people should “take into account indigenous identity, with particular attention to young people and women; not only considering them, but including them” (para. 6).

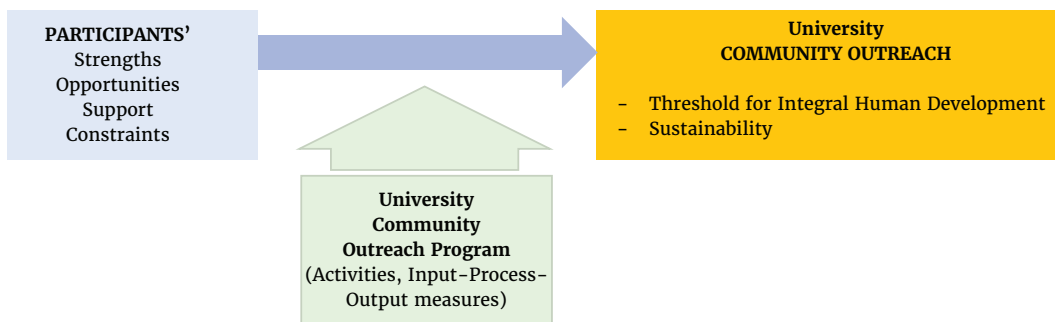
Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič highlighted that Indigenous people experience some of the highest rates of poverty, which makes them

more vulnerable, not only to the COVID–19 pandemic, but also to other current challenges such as climate change and natural disasters. Further compounding the situation, the ongoing health crisis has forced restrictions on movement, which has increased food and water insecurity and hindered access to medical supplies among these hard–hit communities. Indigenous communities, he affirmed, are “principal dialogue partners and should be included in all decision–making processes at the political level, especially those affecting them directly” as they are not “merely one minority among others” (Holy See, 2020, “Appeal for Inclusion of Indigenous Communities,” para. 1).

University–community outreach can best be implemented toward integral human development. There is a greater chance of stability and sustainability if systematic collaboration is ensured between the university and its COP participants. The concept of integral human development in this study is focused on the personal, economic, social, ecological, and spiritual aspects. The conditions of the COP participants are shaped by factors such as strengths, opportunities, support, and constraints. COP activities and input–process–output measures are centered on physical health, education, food and water security, inclusion, and sustainability. These aspects are illustrated in the conceptual framework below (Figure 1).

Individual faculty members, personnel, and staff who remained in their hometowns during the pandemic were also restless. They witnessed the many effects of the COVID–19 pandemic on the lives of people in their respective communities. The call

**Figure 1. University–Community Outreach Program Toward Integral Human Development**



for personal initiatives was irresistible, and the response was intense. The UA&P Community Outreach Program was then brought outside Pasig City, where UA&P was located.

### **The Kabagis Aeta Projects**

The Kabagis Aeta Projects (KAP) is one of the UA&P's COPs. Its initial goal was to provide used goods, groceries, and rice to the poorest Aeta families residing in Kanaynayan, San Pablo, Castillejos, Zambales during the pandemic. In less than one year, it has achieved this goal and has moved toward a more important goal, which is Aeta capability building. Various aspects of the project have undergone the process of planning, implementation, and evaluation, with a focus on the impact to the community and academic community, quality, and sustainability.

Since it was a response to mitigate the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the KAP is not structured but based on volunteer work and does not receive funding from UA&P. Nevertheless, the activities promote the UA&P mission, and the program implementation and report documentation are submitted to the UA&P Management Committee.

### **The Initiators**

This author has been with the University of Asia and the Pacific since 1996. The UA&P COP KAP is a project of the *Esposo Ramirez Family Social Responsibility*. With many years of experience in education, project management, and cooperative work, husband and wife Lamberto and Veronica, together with their children who were students at the University of Asia and the Pacific, led the KAP to improve the lives of Indigenous people. Two other children, Vyera and Joshua, who worked as nurses in the United States, were also remotely involved.

This author was on sabbatical in 2020 and moved to her hometown, Castillejos, Zambales. In March of the same year, the COVID-19 pandemic spread globally and throughout the country. Thus, aside from doing her research on overseas Filipino work, this author and her family embarked on helping the Aetas who reside in the far mountains and lowlands of Barangay San Pablo. This activity fulfilled part the UA&P

mission where community outreach is enshrined:

A university must be ever attentive and responsive to the real needs of the community that sustains it, seek to significantly contribute to human progress, and do everything it can to uplift the moral, cultural, and material level of the country and the region in which it operates. (UA&P, 2020, Section 1)

### **Methodology**

In order to understand how the university can perform community outreach programs geared toward integral human development during a pandemic, the UA&P Community Outreach Program Kabagis Aeta Projects is here described and analyzed. Two questions are addressed: (1) What are the strengths, opportunities, support, and constraints that affect community life? (2) How can the UA&P Community Outreach Program and its effects on the beneficiaries be described? Training needs analyses, reports, and results of rapid rural appraisal were utilized, and anecdotal evidence and reports were used. An analysis of the KAP led to findings on how integral human development and sustainability can be achieved through the COP. Informed consent was obtained verbally from the beneficiaries selected purposefully for anecdotal evidence. Since many of the KAP participants are unschooled, many cannot write their names and therefore use thumbmarks when asked for signatures. Proof of agreement to participate is seen through records of benefits claimed, photographs, and video testimonials. The primary sources of information were Elderly Leader Manuel Romualdo, Tribal Chieftain Jamoksol Sulit, Aeta family Marlon (+) and Belinda Trece, Custodian Marie Gracela, Department of Education (DepEd) Alternative Learning System (ALS) teacher and literacy teacher Irwyna Cosme.

The KAP used a targeted approach for its interventions. To show appropriate respect by outsiders wanting to learn more about the Aetas through elicitive and extractive means, rapid rural appraisal (Chambers, 1992) was conducted in close collaboration with community leaders who shared their ideas about how they are as Indigenous people and what they need to improve their lives. Continuous information gathering occurred at different times during the intervention period from

March 2020 through June 2022 so as not to divert Aeta participants from their cultural identity, beliefs, and practices.

In accord with efforts aimed at local ownership, control, and capacity building, the Aetas were the source of information and participated in decision-making regarding priority needs, usage of intervention, sustainability measures, and selection of poorest beneficiaries. Each project cycle included needs assessment, design and planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The reports per activity and intervention summarize the implementation and evaluation.

The program goals, activities, and processes are analyzed in this article using input–process–output measures. Results of the analysis yielded lessons about both the challenges and accomplishments of the UA&P COP KAP, on the basis of which conclusions were made and recommendations were given.

### The Aeta Participants

The Aetas are the earliest known inhabitants of the Philippines. These Indigenous people are a nomadic people, dark-skinned and curly-haired; small in stature and skilled in hunting and jungle survival. The Aetas in Castillejos reside in the lowlands and mountains that are part of Barangay San Pablo, the third most populous barangay with a total population of 11,579 (female: 6,579; male: 5,000 in the 2015 census). Aetas reside in several sitios in Barangay San Pablo—Bagong Silang, Balenting, Papaya, and Amianan in San Isidro and Sitios Nilasin, Kamanggahan, Kakilingan, Maage-age in Kanaynayan, to mention a few. There are chieftains, pastors, and Aeta elderly leaders who lead the communities on matters of decision making, promote their Indigenous practices, and are involved in political affairs.

There are structures for religious services and a public cemetery. Two decades ago, the local government unit (LGU) constructed a health center and training center, but these structures have not been operational due to lack of health care workers, health facilities, and training projects. The structures are now dilapidated.

The Aeta house varies from “half body” to thatched hut with walls covered with some hollow blocks, woven bamboo, luna (canopy awning), or used tarpaulins. The flooring

is the earth. An elevated bamboo platform serves as a bed for the family to sleep at night. They keep their houses simple so it is easier to move out when there are frequent illnesses and unpleasant occurrences in the family. There are no private toilets and no plumbing. Only some sectors have electricity. Mosquitos and flies are everywhere, especially at harvest time in the nearby poultry. Childbirth occurs at home, administered by Aeta komadrona. In difficult delivery conditions, the health center midwife is summoned if one is available. There are occasional medical missions by health workers with private organizations, such as circumcision, contraceptive implants, and feeding children. Herbal medicines recommended by the elderly are widely used among the Aetas. Certain plants are used for various women’s health problems, such as menstrual disorder, labor induction, postpartum relapse, and lactation. Some plants are commonly used for medicinal preparation for decoction, infusion for therapeutic purposes, or oil extract.

A number of families are beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps; Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, n.d.), a human development measure of the national government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor, to improve the health, nutrition, and education of children up to age 18.

During the early months of pandemic, the Aeta received ayuda (relief goods) from local and provincial governments. They observed pandemic protocols such as wearing of face masks, but not social distancing, as they are close together in the kulong kulong (motor-bike with sidecar) and in the marketplace. In October when health workers went to Bagong Silang to administer anti-COVID-19 vaccines, the Aetas fled to the mountains in fear. It was only when the LGU prevented entry to the market and other agencies and business establishments by unvaccinated people that they finally received vaccinations.

The Aetas have access to vast areas of livelihood resources, both within their residence area and in neighboring areas like gasak (ancestral land or swidden farms) and lahar (area near volcanic debris). They collect honey from bees and extract silver stones in caves, which they sell at 200 Philippine pesos (PhP) per kilogram. They catch bats, snakes, lizards, and more in mountain caves. During rainy days, there are native

mushrooms to harvest. Since March 2020, the series of lockdowns limited their selling in the market to two to three days a week. Some of them use kulong kulong, mainly to transport their products to the market and for personal use.

Even before the pandemic, no Indigenous development programs specifically designed for the Aetas in Castillejos directly addressed skills development, especially of young adults, or provided assistance for agricultural production and marketing. In fact, the bridge that was haphazardly constructed was left unfinished after the May 2022 elections. It was hoped to connect the road to the market to the two rivers to the thickly populated sitios of Nilasin and Kanaynayan where the only public elementary school is situated. There are also occasional instances of “gift giving” from politicians and religious activities led by different sects. Although the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) offers trainings, very few Aetas qualify because of the requirements of a birth certificate, high school diploma, and other documents that the Aetas do not possess. The few who qualified for baking training received four electric ovens, but these were sold after the training because there is no electricity in their residential area.

In the lowlands where there are Aetas, vast hectares of land are occupied by Magnolia Poultry (a meat supplier), private individuals, and some lots that were donated to the Aetas by former governor Amor Deloso and past LGU administrations. The Aetas are allowed to plant sweet potato, cassava, ginger, taro, yam, and other vegetables for family consumption. Bananas and papaya are harvested in the gasak and sold in the market. For small business capital, they take loans from ASA Philippines Foundation, Inc., a microfinance NGO founded in 2004. ASA charges low interest and collects payment every Thursday.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of confining themselves in their home while the Aetas experienced poverty due to lockdowns, this author and her family started mobilizing friends for used items, groceries, and rice that could be distributed to the Aetas. Every time they went to Manila, they brought back to Zambales loads of used items from friends. Throughout the year, more donations came, so they had to transport more goods to Zambales through

Victory Liner or Transportify freight services.

## The UA&P COP KAP Outreach Activities

With expertise in research, this author surveyed specific sitios for the poorest families and obtained photo documentation and data on their family members, age, sex, and means of livelihood. When enough donations were received from generous donors, distribution of goods and implementation of projects immediately started. The UA&P COP KAP was conducted in three phases.

### Phase 1

Phase 1 of the KAP consisted of a monthly supply of rice, groceries, and goods, a presentation of hygiene and health videos, and the construction of the Sitio Nilasin Study Center and Water Storage System.

### *Distribution of Used Goods, Groceries, and Rice*

Initially, the 20 poorest Aeta families benefited from distribution, which started in January 2021 and by June 2022 had reached 100 families. The monthly distribution occurred on site or at the Esposo residence at the town proper, with strict observance of pandemic protocols such as handwashing, wearing face masks, alcohol disinfection, and social distancing. Donors who have the full trust of the Esposo Ramirez family provide rice and groceries worth PhP 500 per month for five or six months, in addition to used clothing, shoes, books, hygiene kit, and many other things. In essence, the family helps these donors help people, and they are happy that their support could reach the Aetas. There were also balikbayan boxes coming from different parts of the Philippines and the United States containing things that are useful and go a long way with the Aetas. In December, UA&P organized a Christmas drive, and it was heartwarming to see several boxes of preloved goods coming to Zambales for them. Other kind-hearted donors are Julie Munsayac, Marissa Catanghal, Medoy Calma, Catherine Zamora, Regina Dimayuga, Chelet Tanjuatco, and many others. Filipinos in the United States Beth Rosas, Chita Romero, Naty Agpalo, Manny De Jesus, and others also sent useful goods or cash for groceries and rice. The family did not have to ask politicians, businessmen, or anyone for donations because these kept coming from friends.

In addition, the Philippine Foodbank Foundation, Inc., founded by UA&P professor Dr. Bernardo Malvar Villegas, occasionally sends food products such as milk, canned goods, and noodles. The foundation is “driven by the utmost concern on the current plight of hunger and malnutrition of the underprivileged,” and was founded on “the concept of seeking donation of ‘soon to expire’ products from reputable companies for distribution to the marginalized families” (GECC Environmental Services, 2021, p. 30).

### *Sitio Nilasin Study Center*

Sitio Nilasin is accessible to many Aetas from different sitios in Kanaynayan, but to get there from town, one needs to cross two rivers. In the Ilocano dialect, “Nilasin” means “separated site.” The university knew that building a study center and water storage system could improve the Aeta community life so that they may be “included” in development rather than “separated.”

The KAP responded to a request for help from the Department of Education’s ALS teacher. For several years, she has been handling classes for Aetas under a makeshift bamboo structure with banana leaf roofing. Badly needed was a structure where children could browse books, practice writing, play educational games, and where ALS modular classes could be conducted as well. The author’s niece, Erin Esposito Araneta, a BS chemistry student at the University of California, USA, was taught by her parents well and has developed a deep social conscience. She helped raise funds to help build the Sitio Nilasin Study Center. She made and sold accessories and sought financial support from ACS Chemistry for Life and Orange County American Chemical Society, who responded positively and generously.

After a memorandum of agreement was signed by the lot owner, Manuel Romualdo, the ALS teacher, then Tribal Chieftain Sulit and Barangay Captain Ronaldo Boquiren, the construction of the study center started on September 15, 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. On October 29, the dream became a reality! No more classroom with banana leaf roofing. Now, they have a brand new study center with a galvanized iron sheet roof, nice walls, and concrete flooring. My high school classmate and good friend, Maria Fe McDermott-Cotton, donated 10 monoblock tables, 28 chairs, and school supplies. Erin sent microscope

replicas, anatomy and chemistry posters, experiment kits, beakers, math boards, and more. The place was furnished with bookshelves with books for all ages, learning materials, a blackboard, bulletin board, crayons, and other educational items that were gathered from friends. Soon, a television set and two used desktop computers were acquired. The study center is now the place for ALS modular sessions, as well as health emergencies sessions conducted by midwife Melanie Gonzales. It is the distribution center and place for viewing of daily news, Holy Mass, the Department of Education learning series, and of course, the famous Teleseryes. Marie Gracela was appointed custodian and provided with a smartphone for ease of communication and coordination of the activities held there. It is also used as an emergency phone by the residents. There were also hygiene videos on proper handwashing, brushing of teeth, safety protocols for COVID, and more, prepared by the family.

### *From Mountain Spring to Water Storage System*

Thanks to YouTube, I found the most appropriate water system for a community in the mountains: sealed drums laid side by side. A 500m 1.5 in. hose attached directly to the mountain spring brought water down to the drums located close to the houses (Figure 2). Through Erin, we received funds from the Small Change, Better World Program of the University of California, Irvine Blum Center (Blum Center for Poverty Alleviation, n.d.), whose mission is to promote social change and inspire the next generation of leaders to action with research on poverty alleviation.

When installation started, there were challenges to overcome, such as negative attitudes. Some who did not receive drums attempted to stop the installation. Someone blocked the mountain spring so that the water system could not be connected to the main source. Other Aeta families requested a drum and hose for their exclusive use, but the university could not address everybody’s issues. We were grateful, though, that the blessings outnumbered the challenges. On March 12, the water system in Sitio Nilasin was completed as planned.

### **Phase 2**

Phase 2 of the KAP responded to the needs for more Aetas because it had gained local

**Figure 2. Water System Installed to Provide Water to Aeta Families**

and international recognition and support.

### *Pumps for Life*

It was a success to bring water from the mountain to Sitio Nilasin. However, the Aetas who live in the lowlands still depended on the river for their water needs, including drinking water. The local government took a long time to install a water system somewhere in Kanaynayan through the local water district. When at last the water system was installed in 2022, the Aetas had to pay for installation and monthly water consumption per cubic meter. It should be noted that the Aetas have no permanent employment and rely on occasional manual labor or selling of mountain crops for subsistence. They cannot afford to pay a monthly water bill. As the population is growing and the summer months badly deprive them of water, the demand for a clean and continuous water supply is increasing and is a serious concern.

The university attempted to do something to help the Aetas. A proposal was drafted for Jetmatic hand pump installation in Sitios Bagong Silang, Mambugan, Amianan, Mawao, and San Isidro. After one year, donations were finally received.

The Philippine Nurses Association of Metropolitan DC (PNA-MDC) funded the installation of 20 Jetmatic hand pumps that benefited 100 families or 429 individuals (Figure 3). In December 2022, they funded the construction of a Health Hub and 10 toilets and baths for the Aeta families of Sitio Mambugan (Figures 4, 5, and 6).

President Carol Robles and some members travelled to the Philippines to turn over the project on January 30, 2023. PNA-MDC has for its mission to “promote professional excellence and contribute to significant outcomes to healthcare and society” (PNA-MDC, n.d., “Mission”). Their donation of 20 Jetmatic hand pump installations to Kabagis Aeta Projects is a manifestation of their goal “to provide financial support or contributions to various legitimate and effective agencies or organizations, including hospitals or clinics that are engaged in charitable aid for the health and welfare of the poor or needy, and similar establishments in the Philippines” (PNA-MDC, n.d., “Goals,” para. 4).

An additional 23 Jetmatic hand pump units came for the Aetas that benefited 76 families or 315 residents, including the community plaza, church, and basketball court.



Engineer Donna Matutina suggested that this author respond to Arcadis Local Sparks' call for proposals for its COVID-19 recovery program. "Arcadis NV is a global design, engineering and management consulting company based in the Zuidas, Amsterdam, Netherlands. It currently operates in excess of 350 offices across forty countries" (D. A. Matutina, personal communication, September 11, 2021). Local Sparks of Arcadis organized a COVID-19 recovery program to improve the quality of life for communities affected by the pandemic. The call for proposals was open to all the countries where Arcadis was in operation. It required answers to the questions, "What are the challenges facing your community? Which areas do you think require immediate action and positive change? What can you do to help recovery in your community? What actions can be taken to make it more resilient in the future?" (D. A. Matutina, personal communication, September 11, 2021). As of the closing of proposal submissions, the Ramirez and Arcadis team's proposal was voted second to Brazil's bicycle proposal. Surprisingly, on October 30, this author received news that Local Sparks COVID-19 Recovery Program selected and will support the proposal for Clean and Continuous

Water Supply for Aeta Indigenous People. The UA&P COP KAP passed the impact categories of physical and mental health; food and water security; economic growth; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and sanitation.

In these construction and installation projects, the participation of Aetas was sought. They provided the needed bamboo and voluntary labor. They were also encouraged to observe and assist in the installation to understand the process. Now we look forward to another project with Arcadis, this time for portable solar panels that the Aetas can bring to the mountainous gasak and lahar where there is no electrification.

### *Building Structures*

As the development initiatives increased, it was necessary to build structures. For this, donations came from friends. The Zamora family and Mrs. Cotoco funded the construction of the Bagong Silang Livelihood Workshop. A former Vietnamese refugee student of this author, Tuan Anh Hoang (who is now in the United States), provided funds for building repair of what has become the Tony Esposito Training Center in Barangay San Pablo.

**Figure 3. Jetmatic Water Hand Pump Installed for Use by Aeta Families**



**Figure 4. Aeta Mothers in the Mambugan Health Hub**



**Figure 5. Toilets Constructed for the Aeta Families in Mambugan**



**Figure 6. Baths Constructed for the Aeta Families in Mambagan**



### Phase 3: KAP Capability Building

#### *Trainings for Carpentry, Motorcycle Maintenance, and Sewing*

Most of the Aetas in Castillejos are un-schooled; a number have studied only up to lower grades. They end up having a family at a young age and then struggle through life with no education nor skills to earn a living for their family. To address this condition, the KAP conducted a variety of capability-building projects.

There was a need to teach mothers how to cook nutritious food for their children and to process the bananas, papayas, yams, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables that they harvest. Fortunately, there were UA&P friends who supported the KAP capability-building projects. Lourdes Basa, the author's former high school classmate who now offers food catering, and other women who could cook simple but nutritious food were tapped to handle the cookery trainings. It is also here that the computer use and adult literacy sessions handled by Irwyna Cosme are held.

There are many young fathers among the Aetas who have not completed schooling and need to develop skills to be able to

sustain their family. The author's family requested childhood friends Drs. Lani Weiss and Yvonne Co, who are based in Canada, to send used and new carpentry tools for the conduct of carpentry training for the Aeta young fathers (Figure 7). Once received, the tools were placed in the cabinet that was made by the first batch of Aeta carpentry trainees in August 2021. The tools are for borrowing when community members have carpentry work. Each trainee also received a home repair tools set. Soon there were trained Aeta carpenters being hired for carpentry work. The more they worked, the better their skills became and the higher the chance they could be hired for work. This brings income for their family.

The family also observed that there were Aetas who owned a motorbike, some with kulong kulong, but did not have repair and maintenance know-how. When the motorbike breaks down, they push it under the heat of the sun until they can find help or a repair shop. Luckily, this author found a local resident, Raymond Reeves, who had 10 years of work experience in Saudi Arabia and was willing to handle trainings on basic motorbike maintenance (Figure 8). After the training, each Aeta received a motorcycle hand tools set.

Some Aeta women were interested in learning sewing. The university was able to acquire four sewing machines from friend Medoy and the UA&P Junior High School students. Through the guidance of their director, Mags Valdez, the students conducted a fund-raising virtual concert. Starting in January 2022, 2-day sewing trainings were conducted by local seamstress Ann Enriquez (Figure 9). Each trainee received a sewing kit with fabric scissors. The trainees were told that after the training, they are welcome to use the sewing machines in the training center for livelihood.

### *Literacy and Other Initiatives*

There are other small initiatives that the family, as development enablers, conducted for the Aetas. For use in times of emergency, a kulong kulong was purchased and is under the care of an Aeta family in Nilasin. This author also discovered that the Aetas use a thumbmark for their signature because they could not write their own name. Thus, the adult literacy sessions were designed. Irwyna Cosme, an Aeta from Botolan who now lives in Mambungan, was tapped and given coaching for literacy teaching. When she was ready, she handled the literacy sessions. Truly, it was joyful to see the learners' progress from using a thumbmark on the attendance sheet on the first day to the following days, when each one could already write his or her name (Figure 10).

As for the Aeta farmers who till lands for rent but did not have carabao, a carabao was purchased through the kindness of Maria

Fe McDermott-Cotton and Leni Sunico. A contract specifying the carabao "care and borrowing rules" was drafted, signed, and submitted to the barangay.

For all of these initiatives, memoranda of agreement were forged with the host, the barangay, and the chieftains. Documentation was submitted to UA&P and technical and financial reports were submitted to donors. In all of the KAP activities, it was made clear to the Aetas that they own the structures, the trainings, and all other donations that they have received. This author emphasized, "If your work is good and durable, it will last a long time, and your children and grandchildren will be able to use it."

The Esposo Ramirez family felt that God has His plans for these Indigenous people. It would be good to bring them closer to God, so the parish priest, Fr. Joel Huerto, was invited to celebrate the "first Catholic Mass" for the Aetas in the mountains and to bless the water storage system. This happened on March 8, 2021 at our Sitio Nilasin Study Center. It was a joyous and meaningful day for all. Five hundred years after the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines, the Catholic presence has begun in this "far-away place" not shown in Google Maps. On October 23, another "first Catholic Mass" was celebrated in Sitio Bagong Silang. It was attended by several Aeta families. On November 6, six children and two adults were baptized at San Nicolas Parish Church. On December 15, 2023, there were more Aeta children baptized (Figure 11).

**Figure 7. Aeta Training for Carpentry**



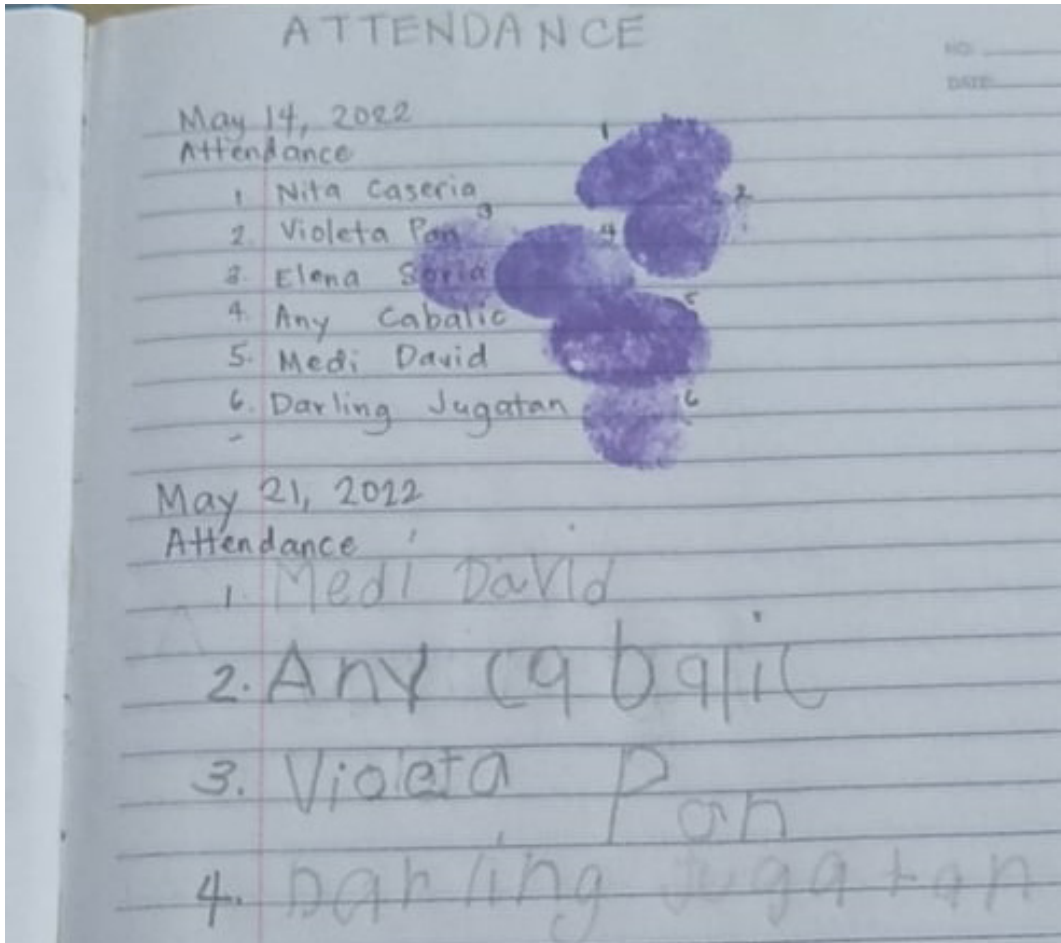
**Figure 8. Aeta Training for Motorbike Maintenance**



**Figure 9. Aeta Training for Sewing**



**Figure 10. Aeta Adults Wrote Their Name in the Adult Literacy Program**



**Figure 11. Facilitated Request for Catholic Baptism of Aeta Children**



### **Feedback From Participants**

The Aeta beneficiaries tell stories about how their lives have improved as a result of the interventions, activities, and capability-building initiatives of the Kabagis Aeta Projects. Using anecdotal evidence, the usefulness of the projects was assessed. Below are some feedback from beneficiaries, translated from Tagalog:

**Re: Sitio Nilasin Study Center.** The Study Center that was constructed is a big help for the Aeta students studying Alternative Learning System. Because of the tables, chairs, blackboard and school supplies, they can now do their learning modules. I use the iPad that was given to me to download DepEd memos and I am now able to attend online meetings and Webinars. (ALS teacher, personal communication, September 23, 2021)

**Re: Water Storage System.** The water storage system that you installed for us, native Aetas benefits us a lot because we used to fetch water from the mountain spring or from the river for cooking, bathing and other water needs. Now, even passersby drink water and wash their muddy feet from the water storage.

We use the portable sewing machine. We watch television to know what is happening in the world. The cellphone is also used by many of us. The books that you put in the Study Center are often used by the children and students of Alternative Learning System in doing their modules.

We hope you do not stop caring for us, native Aetas. Our prayers for you and gratitude. (Marie Romualdo Gracela, personal communication, September 24, 2021)

**Re: Adult Literacy Sessions.** It brings happiness and pride for the adult Aetas to at last be able to write their names and recognize some written words and numbers. (Irwyna Cosme, personal communication, May 5, 2022)

**Re: Health Emergencies Sessions.** It is big help for the Aetas to know what to do in cases of emergencies

that happen in the mountains and low lands. We learned what to do in case of snake bite, wound, difficulty in breathing, stomach ache, falling from a high place, cramps, skin burn and others. The First Aid Kit that you gave is important for us. (Susana Vitug, personal communication, June 11, 2022)

**Re: House Construction.** Thank you very, very much ma'am, we now have a house because of your help. We will no longer get wet in the rain. My brother and I are very happy. We will always pray for you. (Edzel Mae and Edmar Gracela, personal communication, March 30, 2021) [House construction donor: Maria Fe McDermott-Cotton and family]

**Re: Jetmatic Hand Pumps Installation.** We thank the sponsors of the jetmatic hand pumps, we hope you will not get tired helping the needy. Everyone needs water. We used to fetch water from the few hand pumps in the neighborhood or from the river that is why we are very grateful that we now have our own jetmatic. Now we can bathe, wash clothes and do all things that need water. In the past, we bring our water containers to fill them up in the river. We also take a bath more frequently now. (Junior Lacson, personal communication, October 23, 2021)

We are grateful for the jetmatic hand pump because now we have water for washing clothes, taking a bath and do all things needing water. (Chieftain Limpio Soria, personal communication, October 23, 2021)

**Re: Catholic Baptism of Six Children and Two Parents.** Madame, Sir and your children. We thank your family wholeheartedly. You have done a great thing for our children to become Christians. I wanted to cry in front of you madame, sir because of all your help to our family which is overflowing. I know that saying Thank you is not enough but my only prayer is for God to guide you always. (Marie Romualdo Gracela, personal communication, November 6, 2021)

### **Information Dissemination**

The University of Asia and the Pacific, proud of its outreach program, featured the Kabagis Aeta Projects online through *Universitas*, the UA&P official publication (Ramirez, 2022a). The global company Arcadis, after completion of the Jetmatics project, also featured the Kabagis Aeta Projects in an article on its website, “Helping Philippines’ Indigenous Community Access Clean Drinking Water” (Arcadis, n.d.). Indeed, many people have noticed what the university was doing. On May 17, 2021, *Family Watch* (2021), and on July 25, 2021, *Buhay Bahay* through DZXL 558 (RMN DZXL 558 Manila, 2021) and Alliance for the Family Foundation Philippines, Inc., both featured the UA&P COP. Opus Dei gave UA&P COP global exposure through publication of a feature article titled “Assisting the Poorest of the Poor” (Ramirez, 2021). Recently, an article about the Kabagis Jetmatic hand pump project supported by the Philippine Nurses Association of Metropolitan DC was featured in *Inside PNNA*, the official newsletter of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc. (Ramirez, 2022b).

### **Summary of KAP Activities**

The 43 Jetmatic hand pumps we installed now benefit a total of 176 families or 744 individuals. They also received water containers, water drums, pails, and dippers. As the population grows, there will be more Aetas who can benefit from the clean and continuous water supply. The number of family recipients of used goods, groceries, and rice for 6 months has reached almost 500. Within one year, several batches of Aetas have undergone training for carpentry (16 trainees), sewing (16), cookery (15), and motorbike maintenance (15). The module coaching for schoolchildren (12 participants), adult literacy (12), and health emergencies (18) sessions have definitely upgraded their knowledge. These trainings provide basic skills that can be honed through more trainings and constant practice that can earn them income to sustain their families.

Training is also a good way to instill values. Values formation among the Aetas is also one of the aims of the UA&P COP. This is done through modeling and verbal communication. To teach cleanliness, a Jetmatic hand pump was installed at the training center. Before they could enter, each one is given a face mask, hand towel, and glass.

Meals, snacks, and transportation allowance are also provided. Each trainee has his/her own tool kit, notebook, pencil, pen, shirt, and bag. Values such as cleanliness, respect, and good quality of work are articulated in the Code of Work Ethics that is explained during orientation and throughout the training. Verbal assessment is given after each training. There are cultural values that cannot be changed, but there are universal values that can be discussed and taught for them to practice. All of these trainings are supported by generous friends who believe that their blessings should be shared with the less fortunate, poor, and often neglected people, the Aetas.

### **Early-Stage Assessment**

University–community outreach programs can be successful only if partnership is active and the beneficiaries are not passive receivers with a “dole out” mentality. If the community is in partnership with the university, the beneficiaries can be more aptly called “participants.” This principle is embedded in the UA&P COP KAP.

During the early months of the pandemic, the government occasionally provided *ayuda*, some cash assistance for select groups in the community, and intensive health preventive and curative measures that required the services of thousands of health workers and volunteers. How about community outreach activities? In the city of Pasig, things slowed down and there were barriers to the accomplishment of collaborative plans with adopted communities. Nevertheless, UA&P could not be silenced by the pandemic. The decision was to make some adjustments and find ways of delivering services while observing the pandemic protocols. As a result, community outreach projects sprang like never before, and went beyond the borders of Pasig and Manila.

At this time of crisis due to the pandemic, people seek ways to help other people. There are many who would like to help but did not know whom to help and where to send help. Together, the university and the Esposo Ramirez family endeavored to take serious action toward community outreach. They turned into development workers who mobilized support from relatives and friends to benefit the Aetas of Castillejos, Zambales.

The KAP, although not as structured in operations, responded to the needs of Indigenous people. As Erickson (2010)



claimed, not all the variables in community life can be addressed by initiatives toward development. In the case of the Aetas, cultural factors and the traits inherent to Indigenous identity as well as ecological considerations should be taken into account seriously. For one thing, their dialect is Sambal, which is not the same as the language of the volunteers.

Through carefully considering all these factors, in a span of 2 years, the projects expanded from goods distribution to capability trainings, and the beneficiaries grew in number. What is common to the study center, livelihood workshop, water storage system, and Jetmatic hand pumps is that they are all located among residences of the Aetas, who certainly look after their upkeep so that they will be useful for a long time.

Capability building was accomplished through skills trainings in carpentry, sewing, motorbike maintenance, cookery, and hair and nail care. The needed tools, workspace, meals, and transportation allowance are provided. The teachers are local residents who understand and respect the Aeta culture, attitudes, and beliefs. They share the same development goals as Ramirez development enablers, donors, and beneficiaries themselves.

As the Aetas assisted in the Jetmatic installation, they learned new skills. As the children saw their fathers assist in the construction of the study center and livelihood workshop, they saw the value of hard work and pride in building something for them.

Although many of the Aetas belong to different religious groups, some want to be Catholics. Assistance is extended to these families or individuals so that they are able to receive the needed sacraments.

Information dissemination regarding the UA&P COP KAP is done through social media, podcast, interviews on radio programs simultaneously aired through YouTube, and articles published globally.

In Zambales, the Esposito Ramirez family collaborated with the IP leaders, the barangay officials and the Catholic Church. The KAP has also gained international recognition and support from the University of California Irvine, the Orange County American Chemical Society, the Philippine Nurses Association in the United States, Arcadis Consulting based in the Netherlands, the Philippine Foodbank Foundation, and a

number of friends and concerned individuals.

The above description of the UA&P COP KAP shows how community outreach can promote integral human development, particularly the personal, economic, social, ecological, and spiritual aspects. Within the integral human development perspective, authentic development integrates each and every person in a humanizing process of standing in relationships of solidarity as we strive together toward promoting the common good. The recognition of the human dignity of each and every person is both the means and the end of this process.

By centering on physical health, education, food and water security, capability building, and sustainability, the UA&P COP KAP has upheld its mission to “be ever attentive and responsive to the real needs of the community that sustains it” and “seek to significantly contribute to human progress” (UA&P, 2020, Section 1).

### Synthesis

This project demonstrated how the university can expand its outreach program beyond its borders at a time of disruptive events, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. Without violating the health protocols, outreach activities were started by faculty members who went back to their provinces when all schools were closed due to lockdowns. This author, a senior faculty member, along with her family and children who were university students, embarked on outreach activities for the Aetas of their hometown, Castillejos, Zambales. Amid the pandemic, they mobilized friends and relatives, and they received donations from philanthropic organizations to extend help to the ethnic minority. From simple distribution of used goods, the project expanded to several months’ supply of groceries and rice for groups of the poorest Aeta families. In the following year, there was opportunity for capability building. The construction of training centers, donations from friends, and collaboration with skilled townsfolk made possible a variety of trainings. Soon, the Aetas were receiving trainings in sewing, carpentry, motorbike maintenance, cookery, health emergencies, and adult literacy. The university students raised funds through an online musical concert to purchase sewing machines. UA&P also responded to the basic need for water through grants from an American university

and society, Filipino nurses associations in the United States, and a global engineering company.

### **Moving Forward With Stronger Community Outreach**

Strengths, opportunities, support, and constraints affect community life. If the participants are aware of these factors, they can actively participate in UA&P community outreach interventions and ensure sustainability. When they overcome the constraints, they can forge a partnership with the COP provider and can actively participate in the development process.

The UA&P COP is composed of structured institutional interventions, as well as unstructured voluntary outreach projects. The unstructured approach was more applicable to the Aeta Indigenous people because there are uncontrolled factors—sociocultural, economic, and political—aside from participants' characteristics that affect implementation.

The aspects of integral human development—personal, economic, social, ecological, spiritual—have been addressed through the consultative and participative processes. Every intervention responded to the Aetas' specific needs. A concrete result that promotes sustainability is the group of trained Aetas now skilled in carpentry, sewing, cooking, and motorbike maintenance who have options to earn a living and support their families. Hygiene and sanitation have improved as a result of the clean and continuous water supply for humans, animals, and plants. Adult literacy and education are improving because classes are now conducted in a stable structure with tables and chairs, learning materials and school supplies. The good example of the Ramirez family as development enablers inspired them to aim for higher goals, such as education and good health. Without imposing spiritual practices, bringing the Catholic church closer to the Aetas benefited their spiritual life.

Using the case of UA&P COP KAP, an input–process–outcome framework can be designed for effective implementation of university–community outreach, as shown in Table 1.

The UA&P COP framework encompasses the life of extension activities and community outreach with two key players: university

and community participants. Inputs from the university include intervention, values formation, and resources. These inputs undergo a process that starts with resource mobilization and goes on to community orientation, signing a memorandum of agreement, planning, and evaluation. The outcome of the inputs and process are partnership and development of the values of responsiveness and volunteerism. Ultimately, the COP contributes to integral human development.

On the part of the community participants, culture and values are of primary importance. When they see that the intervention does not conflict with their needs, beliefs, practices, and traditions, they are more open to change. They participate in the UA&P COP process and eventually forge partnerships; they have access to capability building, and they learn new skills and work values. Consequently, their living conditions will improve. As they support the intervention with their own resources, “ownership” develops, which is a step toward sustainability.

### **The Future of University Outreach Programs for Indigenous People**

Because “beneficiaries” are active partners in community outreach programs, they can more aptly be referred to as “participants.” The strengths and opportunities that participants possess and can access may not be clearly known to them. Universities, with their academic expertise, can help the participants identify and develop these assets and working capital for development within the larger community or in partnership with external agencies.

Strong partnerships with universities, both local and abroad, can be tapped for their students who, while still young, can be exposed to the values and benefits of community outreach. Such experiences can inspire and motivate them to seek ways to contribute to community development when they are older.

Beyond physical and structural interventions and resources, values formation can be integrated into community outreach programs so as to achieve integral human development. This is in keeping with the vision of most universities that espouse the development of human potential.

The framework for a university–commu-

**Table 1. Framework for Implementation of University–Community Outreach Program (COP)**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>UA&amp;P COP as community outreach provider</b>	<i>Interventions</i> for health, education, food and water security, capability building, etc.  <i>Values formation</i>	Resource mobilization Community orientation Memorandum of agreement Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting Monitoring and evaluation	Partnership Operation guidelines for completed structure Responsiveness to community needs Volunteers' awareness of social responsibility HEI mission achieved Contribution to integral human development Support for sustainable development goals
	<i>Resources</i> • Leadership • Human resources • Time and space • Financial assistance	Implementation Collaborative work	Work completion and function Sustainability
<b>Community participants</b>	<i>Culture and values</i> • Aware of community needs, beliefs, practices, traditions • Socioeconomic, political life • Acceptance of change	Support for labor and local materials Participation in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation Application of ability/skills	Partnership New skills Capability building Values formation Improved living condition Family goal toward development
	<i>Resources</i> • Human resources • Time and space	<i>Participation in activities</i> • Training • Volunteerism • Collaboration	Utilization of structure and other inputs Operations support for sustainability

nity outreach program can be used for systematic and effective implementation. The indicators can be specified according to the goals, characteristics, and capability of the university. More faculty and students can come together to design literacy- and numeracy-learning modules. The potential of

the study center, the livelihood workshop, and the training center can be maximized by providing continuous training and skills upgrades. Eventually, potential clients or markets can also be explored to absorb the products and outputs of participants' newly learned skills.



### About the Author

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