

# COMING TOGETHER



SAMDHANA

• Newsletter •

#004-February 2023

Updates  
for January  
February 2023



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## Samdhana is 20 years young!



2023 marks the 20th year of Samdhana Institute as a formally registered organization in the Philippines and in Indonesia. This milestone is not only our own, but is a shared win with partners whom we have been working with throughout these years. Samdhana will celebrate by co-creating events with Partners and listening to voices from the young, women, IPLCs and CSOs in the region, on the lessons we have gained from the last 20 years, and their vision for the future.

Through co-organized 'listening and co-creating' events, we aim to explore what skills and knowledge we need to navigate together the next 20 years with Samdhana Partners, Fellows, Board and Staff.

We would like to learn how to better act as a support organization, in particular how we can improve our strategies and approaches working with the different groups, such as indigenous peoples in their respective cultural contexts, local communities; with the women; the youth; and differently abled communities.

By listening better, we hope to learn to be kinder with each other, coming from our reflection from the recent pandemic; and to be more innovative so we can build a learning community welcoming of the next generation activists and supportive of the social and environmental movement in the coming 20 years.

This is the initial [line-up of events](#) that we hope to co-organize with other Partners. More updates on the events as these will be firmed up, so watch out for it.

## Institutional Evaluation to Improve

In view of Samdhana Institute's 20th anniversary, we are undergoing an institutional evaluation to help us capture the lessons, gaps and areas to improve in our work. The evaluation process is being carried out by a team of highly-credible external evaluators based in Indonesia. Starting off with the online survey for Staff, Board members, and Fellows, the institutional evaluation started in early January. The methodology includes one-to-one interviews with key partners and stakeholders and visits to sample community partners and grantees in Indonesia, Laos, Philippines and Thailand. The results of the external evaluation will be coming out early second quarter of the year.

Here are a few snapshots of the community visits:



## Accreditation for Samdhana

On January 25, 2023, Samdhana, through the Cagayan de Oro (CDO) office in the Philippines, submitted the request for accreditation, upon the directive of the City Council of Cagayan de Oro City and the Department of Interior and Local Government (Circular 2022-083). One of the purposes for the directive to non-government organizations to be accredited by the local government unit is to enable them to join in local special bodies (LSB), some of which are the Local Development Council, Local School Board, Local Health Board, and Local Peace and Order Council. In addition, accredited CSOs have better opportunities for participating in local government programs.

The 20th City Council, presided by Vice Mayor Jocelyn B. Rodriguez, through a resolution 14474-2023 on February 13, 2023, approved the accreditation of Samdhana Institute, Inc. as a fully compliant and registered NGO, pursuant to DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2022-083 and Article 64, Rule XIII of the Rules and Regulations Implementing the 1991 Local Government Code.

This accreditation will enable Samdhana to become a member of any of the local development bodies in Cagayan de Oro, as mandated by the Local Government Code, to increase CSO participation.

Samdhana is currently sitting as a member of the Ecological Services and Protection Committee of the CDO City Council. We are pursuing similar LGU accreditations in the municipalities within our priority “Lifescape”. This is opportunity to increase collaboration with government units and agencies as duty bearers, and also increase IPLCs direct access through linkage for basic services and policy lobbying.

## Launching of 20@20

For our 20th year, we have the ambition to plant 20,000 trees, in 20 hectares, with 20 community partners in the Philippines. Under bright skies, we launched the 20@20 Tree Growing and Fundraising campaign on February 25, 2023.

Together with the host community led by Panaghiusa sa mga Higaonon sa Awang (PAHINA) organization, and Partners: Barangay Awang Local Government Unit, Opol Municipal Local Government Unit, Knights of Columbus Council 17653, Babaye sa Baybay Association, Safer River Life Saver, East West Bank - Pueblo de Oro Branch, and Mother of Perpetual Help Parish (Barra, Opol), we conducted the fifth round of tree-planting in Sitio Panlablaba, Brgy. Awang in the Dulangan Ancestral Domain in Opol, Misamis Oriental. Another estimated 150 seedlings of endemic trees such as narra, lauan, ylang-ylang, and dao were planted in the ancestral domain. Read the full story of the launching program and tree-growing at page 11.



## Collaboration to Protect and Strengthen Indigenous Institutions in Tambrau Regency

#tenure #IPLCrights

Collaboration with the local community, government, and CSOs helps to strengthen customary institutions. This was demonstrated during the Tambrau Indigenous Peoples' Institution (LEMATA) Customary Meeting which took place in Fef District on January 19, 2023.

An organization or community institution known as a “customary institution” is one that has been set up by a particular customary law community.

They also play an important role in carrying out government tasks, implementing projects, and fostering community development at the village and sub-district levels. Because of this, customary institutions have a big responsibility getting and keeping people involved in the community.

Paulinus Baru, who is the leader of LEMATA said that the Insitution would eventually become a forum for coordination shared by major tribes in the Tambrauw district, namely the Abun, Miyah, Irires, Mpur, Moi Kelim, and Biak tribes, to move toward better indigenous people-based development.

LEMATA will also put out a book about the history and formation of Tambrauw district. The goal is to bring back to life important Tambrauw warriors who fought for their people. They will build a traditional house that will serve as a center for Tambrauw Customary Law Community (MHA) activities, to improve their coordination with the local government, and make it a venue for learning and sharing their ideas.

The customary meeting began with a traditional ceremony, which started around 08.30 local time. This is carefully observed as part of their effort to revive their culture.



The ritual was carried out right next to the Aka Wuon-Samdhana Joint Mess in Ibe Village. This ritual must be done in order to get blessings from community elders who helped the villages and Tambrauw Regency grow and change in the past.

After the ritual, the invited guests walked to the meeting location and were greeted by a traditional dance from one of the tribes. Those present included the Special Staff for the Presidential Representative for Papua Febiola Ohe, Head of Monev Data for Special Autonomy for West Papua Provincial Secretariat Vitalis Yumthe, West Papua MRP Representative, Tambrauw Regency Regional Secretary, Former Secretary General of AMAN Abdon Nababan, and several members of the Tambrauw Regency House of Representatives.

Local government representatives who attended this event hoped that the cooperation between elements in Southwest Papua region will continue to be strengthened.

Southwest Papua is one of the priority lifescapes of Samdhana, where we bring together our various approaches in grantsmaking, direct capacity development, facilitation support and policy development support to help build community resilience. ###





## Seeing Better Opportunities: Coffee Brewing Training for Diffables

#GEDSI #greenlivelihoods #yestheyacan

How many coffee brewing techniques do you know? Well, the diffable participants in the coffee brewing training learned at least four ways to make their coffee: V60, Tubruk, Aeropress, and Vietnam Drip.

LifeHouse Management (@lifehouse\_idn), a consulting agency that provides training in Bali, and Komunitas Kopi Bayang Bali (Bali Shadow Coffee Community), with support from Samdhana, conducted the training on the basics of bartending for differently-abled persons or diffables, particularly those who are blind and deaf. From January 6 to 20, 2023, eight participants met at Kalanaya Space & Bar (@kalanaya.space), a coffee shop in Kerobokan, Badung, Bali, with expert baristas who shared their knowledge and skills on how to make coffee.

Participants were divided into two groups: four people in batch 1 (who had participated in previous coffee brewing training in September 2022) focused on practicing manual brewing, and four people in batch 2 practiced espresso-based material using an electric grinder and basic brewing. The fun part is the hands-on activities, as participants created cappuccinos and lattes, and drank it too!

The coffee brewing training is also part of the menoken, an activity derived from the word “noken,” which means knotted net or woven bag handmade by communities in Papua and West Papua Provinces of Indonesia. The menoken, as symbolized by the noken bag, personifies the idea of building strong networks that unite, support, and work together through exchanges and connections.

Read full article in [here](#).







## Reviving traditional food systems among the Higaonon and Tagbanwa

It may well be said that for the Higaonon in Dulangan Ancestral Domain in Misamis Oriental and the Calamian Tagbanwa in Coron town in Palawan, culture embraces the way they provide food for themselves. All they needed to do was grow their own crops or pick edible plants that grow freely in their surroundings, hunt in the forest and fish in the sea and rivers.

That was many years ago, before they became reliant on buying food from the market. But, as the two communities realized during activities under Agrobiocultural Diversity of Indigenous Food Systems (ABCD in Food), a project facilitated by the Samdhana Institute, the eventual reliance on the market didn't come as a choice; as the community members themselves put it, it was forced by factors like land use conversion, deforestation, development aggression, soil degradation, climate change, and displacement.

## Tradition as key to food security

The project, which was implemented in coordination with the indigenous political structure of the communities, consisted of documentation activities and learning exchanges between the Higaonon and Tagbanwa. It aimed to revive the way the two communities value their traditional food systems and the food sources and practices within their ancestral domains, and to help indigenous peoples develop resilience. It built on efforts starting in 2018 and became timely during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many communities, especially those in the urban areas experienced food insecurity.



Riza Apdian, one of the Higaonon women participants, said the food documentation helped her go back to her roots as an indigenous person.

Read the full article [here](#).



## Nurturing Connections through 20@20 Tree Growing and Fundraising

To borrow a popular quote of Lucy Larcom, ‘(S)he who plants a tree, plants a hope.’ The Higaonon community of Sitio Panlablaba, Awang in the Dulangan Unified Ancestral Domain (DUAD) is on its third year of re-planting the bare hills in their area. Under the leadership of the Datu Macalamag Marcus Nabatla, Sr., and with the participation of the youth and women, they had successfully established their nursery even at the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, and have continued to grow seedlings for re-planting.

Last February 25, 2023, sitio Panlablaba community hosted Samdhana Institute and other partners, for the launching of 20@20 – a tree growing and fundraising campaign. In celebration of Samdhana’s 20th anniversary, it is scaling up its fundraising campaign to support at least 20 indigenous and local communities plant 20,000 trees in 20 hectares.

Supporting the tree-growing were the partners, namely Barangay Awang Local Government Unit (LGU), Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) of the Opol Municipal LGU, Knights of Columbus Council 17623, Babaye sa Baybay Association,

Safer River Life Saver, East West Bank - Pueblo de Oro Branch, and Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish (OMPH in Barra, Opol). There were also volunteers from the Laudato Si youth organization, environmental science students from the University of Science and Technology in Southern Philippines (USTP), and students from Xavier University joined the activity.

Erwin Quinones, the Deputy Executive Director of Samdhana for Philippines and Mekong, recognized the hard work of the community in restoring the forest in the area. He also shared that in various communities in Cagayan de Oro, Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon, with whom Samdhana works with, they have been establishing endemic tree nurseries, and conducting tree-growing regularly. With the help of these partner communities, we are already on the way towards the goal of planting 20,000 trees, and even more. He encouraged everyone to contribute to 20@20, by organizing community tree-growing events and connect with Samdhana, and with other communities.

Rosemarie Delada, the President of Kababaihan sa Panlablaba (KASAP) and Nanay Perlita and shared their experiences and efforts in improving the environment for their children's future. It was heartwarming to hear that, before, for Nanay Perlita, it was very difficult for her to join in activities. She did not even think that they would be the ones initiating projects in their community, but now, she is actively taking part in their reforestation and agro-ecology projects.

Ms. Meiyoshi Masgon, a practitioner of sustainable sanitation, gave a brief input on ecology principles and the importance of water sanitation and hygiene (WASH). She started with the impacts of anthropological activities and how it will affect all living things. She discussed the seven ecological principles, citing that humans are stewards of God's creation and that all forms of life are essential and important. She discussed about proper waste disposal, the importance of proper toilets and sanitation. These are very important in order to protect water bodies. She presented alarming statistics on the rapid growth of human population, those who do not have access to clean water, and sanitation/ toilet facilities progress in the Philippines. Ms. Meiyoshi previously worked with

Xavier University Sustainable Sanitation Center under the School of Medicine, and is currently working in the Department of Interior and Local Government, and as an instructor of Xavier University National Service Training Program.

After the learning session, the group shared their insights, ideas and personal impressions.

Ms. Sandra, the representative of OMPH, shared her appreciation of how Samdhana's and the community's efforts connect with the efforts of the church. In their parish, under the leadership of Fr. Enrique Escobar, MSSC, they are encouraged to respond to the call of Laudato Si. Last November 2022, the no-single-use-plastic policy was established in their parish. Therefore, in their seminars and activities, bottled water is not allowed anymore. Together with the organization Babaye sa Baybay, they are establishing livelihoods while protecting the environment. Babaye sa Baybay are currently contracted to sew the sutana or cassock, a full-length garment of a single color worn by Christian clergy. OMPH and Baybay have active roles in making the church sustainable, such as making and putting up eco-friendly reminders and participating in tree growing events such as this.



They work with the belief that “Kung dili sugdan, kanus-a? Kung dili pud kami sa among parokya, kinsa man?” (If we don’t start now, then when? If not us in our parish, then who?). According to Babaye sa Baybay, it is their first time engaging in activities to promote environmental restoration, and they are grateful that they want to share their great experiences with their family and friends.

Others who participated in the tree-growing, shared their own initiatives to protect the forest. One agro-ecology woman farmer said that they are enthusiastic about protecting their watershed because this is where the water for their rice fields come from. If there is no more water, there will be no rice fields, and there will be no more food.

The MENRO Officer reiterated the support of the Opol LGGU. He also cited their efforts of the such as the crafting of the forest plan use, wherein all related environmental plans and projects will be addressed accordingly by the implementing agencies such as MENRO and the various organizations and individuals who have exerted their efforts for different environmental projects. The LGU of Opol expressed their gratitude to Samdhana, Datu Marcus, and the locals for allowing and taking the initiative of healing and restoring the area for future generations.

Mr. Johnny Cabreira, member of the Knights of Columbus and also a Fellow of Samdhana, and Mr. , also a Knight, suggested ideas to support the fundraising to help the Panlablaba community sustain and expand the tree-growing efforts. They mentioned that more and more members are expressing interest to join succeeding tree-growing events, as they also want to nurture the environmental awareness among their members. ###



## The Dream Weavers of San Rafael

It's damgo In Bisaya or Cebuano, and damugu among the Higaonon and Talaandig. Both words mean the same thing -- dream. It's also the name that the Lumad weavers of Barangay San Rafael in Talakag town in Bukidnon gave themselves - the Damugu Weavers Association.

Weaving, or paglala, among the islands' native inhabitants dates as far back as the 13th century. Normally, if not exclusively done by women, the craft served a cultural purpose as the indigenous peoples' link to the spirits, whom they would invoke for protection and good health.

But Irene Sinhayan, who initiated in 2018 the formation of Damugu, lamented that weaving has become a dying art. Truth is, excluding herself, there were only five weavers left in their community when the group was formed in 2018. At 36, she's the youngest of them all.

It was just providential, Irene said, that the Talakag Tourism Office ordered from her small mats and sling bags for the Kaamulan Festival, an annual fanfare in Bukidnon featuring Bukidnon's indigenous culture. Ethnic items are mainly used during the street dancing competition, the highlight of the festival. That obliged her to look for weavers so she could meet the demand.

More importantly, that made her realize the need to revive weaving not only as a livelihood activity but also as a way to keep a cultural

tradition alive. It's a dream that she wanted to come true. She subsequently organized the five weavers into a group that they agreed to call the Damugu Weavers Association.

Of the five weavers, the eldest is Celistina Agsunod, 76, and the only one who knows lettering. The rest are Bai Cornita Sagayan, 54; Susita Taon, 66; Ermelinda Ontihay, 68; and Elgesa Ontihay, 38.

### **Lack of materials**

The weavers are using sudsud (common rush or soft rush), a plant that grows in moist soil, as their material for mats and other items. "However, at the start we had to buy from Barangay Tagbak because there's no more sudsud left in our place," Irene recalled.

"It was only in 2022 that we started planting sudsud through a project supported by Samdhana. It's now harvestable but we have to set aside some of it as planting materials," she added.

For dyes, Irene said, they are using a plant called palawag. But she said that since palawag can only produce yellow dye, they have to buy other dyes in neighboring Cagayan de Oro City.

"We're looking for other plants that can produce other colors." She further noted that they need to undergo more training in coloring.

### **More weavers, but...**

Bai Cornita is considered the master weaver. "I just tell her what items need to be done, as she already knows the authentic designs," Irene said.

The group has trained over 30 weavers since, the youngest a nine-year old girl, she said. A mat takes an average of one week to finish. "This is because a weaver has to perform other tasks in her family like taking care of the children," she explained. She said she herself has children to attend to.

Single-sized mats cost 880 to 980 pesos depending on the intricateness of the design while double-sized ones sell at 1250 pesos, she said.



She added that aside from mats she has also produced mobile phone cases, backpacks and laptop cases from sudsud.

“Yet, we cannot just produce due to problems in financing and marketing. We depend upon orders,” she pointed out, adding some of them would work as manapasay (cane-cutters) to earn some money while waiting for buyers.

In a bid to draw more customers, Irene said she’s using social media to promote their products. Currently residing in Barangay Songco in neighboring Lantapan town, also in Bukidnon, she is making use of the art shops and galleries in the place as display areas.

Songco, a predominantly Talaandig village, is famous for its painters who use soil as their main material as well as musicians who not only perform but also produce bamboo flutes and other ethnic musical instruments.



“I also go wherever the tribe holds an activity [to try and sell our products],” she said.

Nonetheless, Irene felt glad that they now have a kamalig (a two-level hut) that serves as their display center and venue for meetings. It’s also where they cook the sudsud and perform the weaving and dyeing processes. She said it’s difficult to cook the materials at home, although she emphasized that they prefer to weave at home during nighttime. She explained that weaving at night when temperatures are low produces better results. Perhaps, it’s really because dreams come at night. (30)

# Secangkir Koppi

This month, our podcast, Secangkir Koppi, talks with the youth from all over Indonesia to share their thoughts on what indigenous youth can do to protect their village and their ancestral heritage. Check out our latest discussion featuring the following guests: Barisan Pemuda Adat Nusantara (BPAN), Seram Barat in Maluku, Komunitas Fakawele, Halmahera in Maluku Utara, Barisan Pemuda Adat Tano Batak in Sumatra Utara, and the Dewan Nasional Perempuan AMAN Regional Kalimantan.



[SECANGKIR KOPPI]-Bincang seputar Peran Pemuda Adat Marlin Seriholo (BPAN, Seram Barat, Maluku)

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/5KnoBE1D6HWGqQWu2NxEx7?si=zKavOIKyS7aVm4tuN\\_isaQ](https://open.spotify.com/episode/5KnoBE1D6HWGqQWu2NxEx7?si=zKavOIKyS7aVm4tuN_isaQ)



[SECANGKIR KOPPI] – Bincang seputar Peran Pemuda Adat bersama Adlun Fiqri (Komunitas Fakawele, Halmahera, Maluku Utara)

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/4JBBUpUSuNPA9o7ePWIMi3?si=LjV\\_Y8z-SXmzw3iKnA60dA](https://open.spotify.com/episode/4JBBUpUSuNPA9o7ePWIMi3?si=LjV_Y8z-SXmzw3iKnA60dA)



[SECANGKIR KOPPI] – Bincang seputar Peran Pemuda Adat bersama Maruli Tua Simanjuntak (Barisan Pemuda Adat Tano Batak, Sumatera Utara)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6QqdQCDR8etqFCbfodWzJx?si=7XLK89pSTu9HqPA0Tm8NA>



[SECANGKIR KOPPI] - Bincang seputar Peran Pemuda Adat bersama Isna Ayunda (Dewan Perempuan AMAN Region Kalimantan)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1QehcvGfodcXmKIBe650Mp?si=2orriBRVtq6Nqij3hkm02A>

Listen to our podcast episodes online:



<https://open.spotify.com/show/1soGaDhKP8HRSHd70iZxjF>

# Around the Networks:

Mitra Bumma's newsletter featuring this story:

[The Evolution of Indigenous Land Management: One Woman's Account](#)

Impactful stories that highlight critical environmental sustainability from [SUMERNET](#)

Here is a list of articles from the Fair, Green and Global Alliance (FGG):

- Report of SOMO's [new research](#) about how pharmaceutical companies profited on COVID-19 vaccines
- An [article](#) on a new legal case filed in UK will become a 'litmus case for just energy transition'
- Sharing the annual report of FGG Member [IT for Change](#)

# Upcoming Events

## **Advisors Regional Meeting**

On March 27-29, 2023, Advisors to Samdhana Grants Programme will be meeting face-to-face for the first regional-wide gathering. This meeting aims to provide updates on the Grants Programme and revisit Samdhana's grantsmaking strategy in view of changes in context. To date, there are 21 volunteers – Fellows and non-Fellows who serve as Advisers to grantsmaking of Samdhana in Southeast Asia region.

## **Women Environmental Defenders' (WE-D) Programme**

The WE-D Cohorts and Fellows' Programme will be completing its first year run at the end of March 2023. Selected Cohorts and Fellows who took part of the WE-D Programme will be joining the national consultation that will be convened by the WE-D Consortium led by The Asia Foundation. Samdhana will also be holding the Culmination Program on March 22-24 in CARAGA region.





An Asian Center for Social and Environmental Renewal

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