

## *Brokering peace among tribes:*

# How HPI is helping end hunger and tribal wars in Kalinga

Everyday at 4:00 AM, before the sun rises, Peter Bangngayon wakes up and heads to the shed he built for the pregnant carabao (water buffalo) he recently received from Heifer. He feeds it with the grass he gathered day before, gives it water, and gently leads it to a pasture area nearby his rice field. "I'm taking good care of her so that her calf will be healthy. I'm making sure that I pass on a healthy carabao to the Basao tribe, and even today I am already looking forward to it," Peter says.

A year ago Peter, a member of the Tulgao tribe in Kalinga, would never think of giving anything to the Basaos. Since Peter was a child, all he felt for other tribe was hatred and the desire to avenge the serious injuries his father had when a Basao, for no reason, struck the old man with a spear at the back. Although Peter was practically a baby when the incident happened, his whole tribe never forgot. As soon as Peter was old enough to understand, many of his tribesmen recounted what had happened and repeatedly prompted Peter to lead the revenge.

"It is in Kalinga culture to avenge, particularly injuries and death. If you forgive or overlook offenses, you will be ostracized, labeled as a weakling and shame of your entire tribe. Being the only son in our family, it fell on me to lead the revenge. I grew up wanting to retaliate, to look for the person who hurt my father or any of his tribesmen. For some reason I never had the chance – maybe it was God's will. Fortunately, we have this project with Heifer. I have learned to forgive and let go of my anger and desire for revenge. Now I want to be a role model for my own and other Kalinga tribes. I want to show that we can forgive, that we need to forgive and work for peace in our province," stated Peter.

### ***Kalinga's tribal conflicts and wars***

Kalinga is one of the landlocked provinces of the Cordillera Administrative Region in North Luzon. Its people, the Kalingas, are one of the major ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines. They are composed of 48 indigenous tribes believed to be descendants of South and East Asians who migrated to the islands thousands of years ago.

Kalinga is bounded by Cagayan and Isabela to the east, Abra to the west, Apayao to the north and Mountain province to the south. Kalinga and Apayao used to be a single province until 1995, when the two were separated for easier governance. Today, Kalinga is divided into eight municipalities, namely Lubuagan, Balbalan, Pasil, Tinglayan, Pinukpuk, Rizal, Tanudan, and the capital Tabuk.



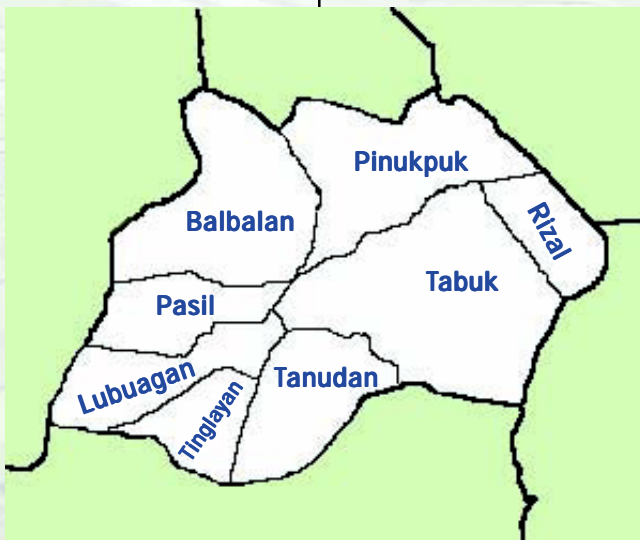
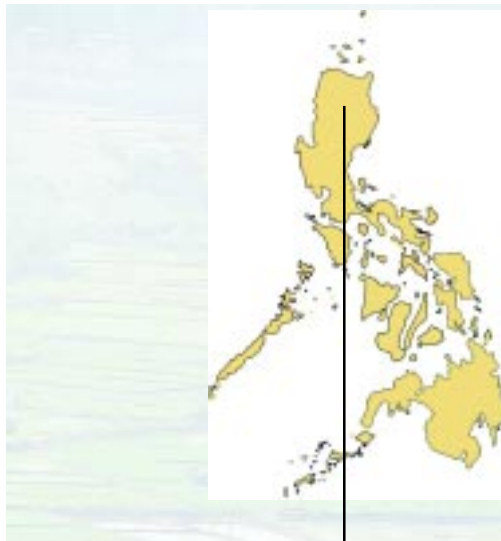
Peter Bangngayon, one of HPI's partners in the GIFTS for PEACE project, wants tribal wars to end in Kalinga. Photo shows Peter with son Eziquiel and the carabao they received from Heifer. (photo by MM Umali)

Kalinga has a mountainous landscape interspersed with sloping plains and valleys suitable for agriculture. The province is considered as the rice basket of the Cordillera Region although corn, coffee, legumes, cassava, citrus, and mangoes are also its main products. The province used to be rich in timber and other forest products, but due to heavy logging concessions during the last three decades and the prevalent practice of slash-and-burn farming, most of the forests and mountain areas have been denuded or turned into arid pasture areas.

Kalinga carries the infamous reputation of being a place of headhunting and tribal wars. The name of the province means headhunter, fighter, or enemy in the *Ibanag* and *Itawes* dialects, coined from the time when men from each tribe went on headhunting rampages to prove their bravery. In old Kalinga tradition, headhunting was a ritual and a man who kills and brings home a head, jaw, or finger of a victim from other tribes is tattooed and hailed as warrior-hero. According to scholars, Spanish and American colonists used the term Kalinga to mark the regions occupied by the warlike headhunters and up to now the connotation persists.

While tribes today do not go headhunting anymore, conflicts among tribes are still going on and an unsettled strife can easily result to tribal wars. According to Sison Paut, the Executive Director of the International Association for Transformation, (IAT), Heifer's partner organization in Kalinga, "most of crime cases in Kalinga are related to tribal conflicts. While it is all quiet right now and there is no war going on, peace and order in the province is volatile because hostilities that happened even long ago can be rekindled. Here in Tabuk, once it is 7:00 PM, you do not see

## Kalinga's geographic location, municipalities, and tribes



### Kalinga tribes in each municipality

#### \*TABUK

1. Tobog
2. Kulminga
3. Gaddang
4. Biga
5. Dallak
6. Nanong
7. Malbong
8. Guilayon

#### RIZAL

1. Tobog
2. Gamonang

#### TANUDAN

1. Dacalan
2. Gaaang
3. Lubo
4. Mangali
5. Bawac
6. Taloctoc
7. Pangol
8. Biga/Madannaao

#### TINGLAYAN

1. Basao
2. Butbut
3. Tulgao
4. Dananao
5. Sumadel
6. Bangad
7. Tongrayan

#### LUBUAGAN

1. Lubuagan
2. Uma
3. Tanglag
4. Mabongtot

#### BALBALAN

1. Banao
2. Gubang
3. Salogsog
4. Dao-angan
5. Mabaca
6. Buaya
7. Ab-abaan

#### PINUKPUK

1. Limos
2. Ballayangon
3. Aciga
4. Ammacian
5. Malagnat
6. Pinukpuk
7. Magaogao

#### PASIL

1. Colayo
2. Guina-ang
3. Balatoc
4. Dangtalan
5. Ableg/Dalupa
6. Balinciagao/Magsilay
7. Cagaluan

\*The capital Tabuk is considered as a *matagoan* or neutral zone. While eight tribes originally inhabit the capital, it is now home to several tribes.



Kalingas are strongly affiliated and very loyal to their own tribes. Photo shows a Kalinga tribe performing a traditional dance. (photo by KMN Rodulfo)

people walking out in the streets and there is hardly any vehicle on the road. There is that fear of either being affiliated with a tribe or caught in crossfire."

The strong affiliation for one's tribe is a reason why tribal conflicts and wars occur. Kalingas are very loyal to their own tribes and traditions. Each one is first identified as a member of his tribe, following its norms and rules in almost all aspects of everyday life. Families belonging to one tribe settle together and contribute to the security and progress of the whole tribe. "A community," says Sison, "is identified by the tribe living in it."

"The culture in Kalinga is that you should not move far from your tribe," stated Ruben Wacas of the Tabuk Lumin-awa-an Center for Social Action (TLC-SAC), a Heifer partner organization under the Catholic Vicariate of Tabuk. "One reason is that if you move far from your tribe, you would not be of much help, and you cannot readily get help. As such, families in most tribes migrate and settle together."

Being closely linked to one's tribe means that one's success is success for the whole tribe, his injury is the injury of all, and his offense is the offense of all. "Because of this strong tribal association, the entire tribe will be involved if anything happens any of its member. So when a person wounds or offends a Kalinga,

it is considered as an affront to the whole tribe," said Andres Ngao-i, Secretary General of the Kalinga Bodong (peace pact) Congress.

"In Kalinga, a tribesman is as guilty as the one who committed the offense. It was planted in the minds of Kalingas that when a tribesman gets injured or killed, the whole tribe should exact revenge," said Jose Pangsiw, a retired Boy Scouts Director and a Kalinga cultural master. "Every time there is an offense, there is that mentality that the whole tribe has to avenge it. An eye for an eye is the main idea for justice," Jose added.

Taking revenge started way back in ancient times, according to Bishop Prudencio Andaya of the Catholic Vicariate of Tabuk. "The root cause of tribal wars goes deep down to former generations who think that revenge was noble. Long ago, it was ritualized. Before a tribe would go to another to exact revenge, a priestess in the community would read omens and declare if it is favorable already to avenge – headhunting if the offense was murder. The men, especially warriors, of the tribe then go with their spears, axes, and shields. In those days, tribes agree to have war, meet in one place, and even have rules of conduct. That was the picture of Kalinga before the advent of guns and modern ammunitions," stated Bishop Andaya.

Because of outside influences and modernization, these rituals have been diluted and eventually lost among tribes. Most Kalingas, however, still have the mindset for revenge. According to Sison, "the traditional conviction would be to take revenge. If you are the victim or the immediate kin, your tribesmen and relatives will prompt you to take revenge, especially the traditionalist elders in the community."

While all tribes immediately resolve petty conflicts, an offense can turn into a cycle of revenge and counter revenge when someone in the tribe dies or loses blood. Kalingas regard blood as life itself and to cause someone to lose blood is tantamount to killing him. Thus, simple offenses such as theft, squabbles, boundary disputes, and insults may spark wars and can take years to settle.

Although revenge is a universal phenomenon, Bishop Andaya said it is especially difficult to prevent in Kalinga. "For one, the culture dictates that the spirit of the victim is still lingering, asking for revenge. In order to appease that spirit, you have to avenge him. It is also done for the peace of mind of the tribe; that they have to give justice to a tribesman who was a victim. Further, what makes it difficult here is that when someone takes revenge, he takes it on any tribesman of the offender. The victim and his entire tribe do not look for the culprit, and this is also why everyone in the other tribe is affected."

While there are many victims and families who opt to forgive, they are often provoked to take revenge. "If you refuse they will criticize and even ostracize you, particularly if you are the immediate male relative. With this, the grief over loss or injury, and the strong tribal association among Kalingas, those who refuse at first will eventually be provoked to take revenge," stated Fred Pangsiw, a local radio host and Kalinga cultural master.

### **Ugly effects**

Bishop Andaya said that Kalinga has a very negative image because of tribal wars. "Kalinga is as peaceful as any place in the world. I will clarify that our province is not a war zone and that wars here are not a day-to-day occurrence. Unfortunately we are labeled as such because of the lingering effects of tribal wars," he stated.

But more than the province's image, the Kalingas themselves are the ones who suffer most from tribal wars. When a war sparks among tribes, everyone goes back to their respective communities for safety. Life is disrupted until the conflict is settled.

The first to be affected, however, are the children and their education. At the onset of a war, children are fetched from school right away. Sison vividly remembers when his tribe, Tulgao, had a rift with the Lubos for a year. "I was in high school then and we had to hide in our community. I had nothing to do with the conflict but I had to stop my studies and hide just because I am a Tulgao," he said.



Kalinga girls in their traditional skirts. (photo by MM Umali)

"I grew up wanting to retaliate, to look for the person who hurt my father or any of his tribesmen. For some reason I never had the chance – maybe it was God's will. Fortunately, we have this project with Heifer. I have learned to forgive and let go of my anger and desire for revenge. Now I want to be a role model for my own and other Kalinga tribes. I want to show that we can forgive, that we need to forgive and work for peace in our province."

- Peter Bangngayon,  
an HPI project partner in Kalinga



Sison Paut (left), Executive Director of Heifer partner NGO International Association for Transformation, Inc, talks with project partners in Dilag, Kalinga over a cup of coffee. (photo by MM Umali)

Ruben, a Taloctoc, had a more difficult experience. "In my four high school years, I had to transfer to five different schools. I had to move each time someone in our tribe had a bitter spat with members of other tribes," he said. Also because of tribal wars, Heifer project partner Martin Wayaway was not able to finish college. "I was in first year college when my tribe had wars with the Butbuts and Lubos. My studies were disrupted as my parents would not allow me to leave our house. Thus, I only graduated high school," he said.

Martin added that everyone in the tribe is emotionally affected. "Although men are the targets, women and children also fear for their safety," he stated. Heifer project partner Juan Dammay explains that "like in any war, you would fear going outside your home. The freedom to move around is restricted and you are always on guard. I am scared of traveling in public vehicles as the person riding beside me might be a member of the tribe we are at war with."

Like Juan, Heifer's Luzon Regional Program Manager Mihan Buliyat experienced the difficulty of going around. "During the wake of my father-in-law, our tribe (Lubuagan) had a war with the Cagaluan. Just to go to my in-law's house, my family had to leave our home at night and walk along a secluded riverbank. It is not safe to use the main road at daylight."

Juan said that a family's livelihood is likewise affected. "I cannot work in my field when our tribe is at war. There were times our family ran out of food because I was not able to plant anything."

Fred said that services in Kalinga are also disrupted as employees take leave en masse. "Because of fear, government and private workers whose tribes are at war take indefinite leave of absence from their work. Our economy is also affected as businessmen will not invest here. Further, many Kalinga professionals have

left the province and this is one reason why we lack services. Because of tribal wars, our province is not as progressive as it should be." Fred added that tribal wars also ruin friendships. "I have seen many times how colleagues who are close suddenly eye each other suspiciously. It is a very ugly thing to observe."

### **Struggling for peace**

Kalingas have long felt the adverse effects of tribal wars and worked for ways to establish peace in the province. One of these is the age-old *bodong*, a peace pact between two or more warring tribes. It is composed of rules and agreements that aim to end tribal war, institute peace and security, and enforce penalties for offenses.

To forge a *bodong* between two tribes, a mediator will bring together the elected peace pact holders from each tribe. If both agree to settle their dispute, each will have their own investigation on how the conflict started. They will then hold negotiations as to what penalties the offending tribe has to pay. In the past, parcels of land, animals, rice, native wine, and jewelries were used as payment and everybody in the offending tribe contributes. After the payment has been made, the two tribes will perform rituals and dance together to celebrate the peace pact, culminating with a feast that symbolizes their newfound brotherhood.

*Bodong* in old times was effective in ensuring peace among tribes. These days, however, some Kalingas doubt its relevance and even attribute it as a cause for tribal wars. They say that *bodong* now is commercialized, used for patronage during government elections, and even exploited as an excuse to go to wars. They also say that Kalinga police and military officers hesitate to execute their duties if their tribes hold a *bodong* with those involved, and suggest that all Kalingas instead follow civil law. Traditionalist Kalingas refute these and right now there is a heated debate on the effectiveness of *bodong* versus civil law.

With or without *bodong*, Kalingas agree that wars can stop if everybody would help in their own way. For Sison, one way to do this is not to participate in tribal wars and refuse helping tribesmen who initiate a conflict. "I do not contribute for the *bodong* penalty because some persons think that they will be helped by their tribesmen anyway. We at IAT made it a policy to withdraw financial support from scholars whose families participate in wars. We are likewise implementing peace advocacy programs among tribes."

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- Jose Pangsiw, Kalinga cultural master**



Mihan Buliyat, HPI's Regional Program Manager for Luzon, has personally felt the dire effects of tribal wars in Kalinga. (photo by MM Umali)

Bishop Andaya, aside from campaigning for peace and forgiveness during masses, founded the Peacemaker's Movement in Kalinga, a counseling and advocacy group under the Cultural Heritage Research Center of St. Louis College - Bulanao for victims of tribal wars. "The movement started in 2004, when I received an envelope during the mass offering. In it were written: mass intention for the repose of the soul of my son who was murdered; and for the spiritual renewal of his killer. I looked for the person who offered the mass intention and I met a woman who related her pain in losing her 20-year old son. Despite her grief, she refused and prevented her family and tribe from taking revenge. She even continued her apostolate work at the prison where the suspected assailant was jailed. From there, we started looking for other victims who refuse to take revenge and met at least nine families. We called them for a meeting and the movement was born. Right now we have 86 members from around 50 families who advocate forgiveness."

While Bishop Andaya says that the Peacemaker's Movement is a big milestone, there is still a long way to go. "We do our counseling and advocacy silently because forgiving offenses is a sensitive topic here. In fact, some of the members do not like to be identified because of fear of being an outcast of their tribe."

Fred agrees with the Bishop as he experienced how to be criticized for advocating peace. "As a media person I try to mediate. But since I am not a peace

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- Bishop Prudencio Andaya,  
Catholic Vicariate of Tabuk



Children are emotionally affected and their education is disrupted when there are tribal wars. Ruben Wacas of Tabuk Lumin-awa-an Center for Social Action, an HPI partner NGO, transferred to five different schools during his high school years. Photo shows Ruben with children from the village of Dilag in Kalinga. (photo by MM Umali)

pact holder, my presence in a tribe is seen as a provocation. I also try not to be affected as much when there is a war so I go on with my everyday work. I am not at fault so why should I take a leave and hide? But others see these as a defiant stance and say that I am further antagonizing the other tribe. Yes, we would like to work for peace in Kalinga but we need all the help we can get."

#### **Cornerstones at work**

HPI has been helping impoverished families in Kalinga since 1999. Initially, HPI implemented projects that focus on distributing animals to partner families. These include the Draft Animal and Environmental Project, Community Animal Health Volunteer, Children in Livestock Development, and the Sustainable Development Program for Luzon. In 2004, HPI celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> year and made program innovations to adapt to the current challenges in development work. HPI underwent a new beginning and shifted its focus on values-based holistic development projects.

Sison said that IAT has long wanted to work with HPI. "We have seen Heifer's work in Kalinga and have been applying for a poultry project. Before its new beginning, however, HPI directly implemented projects. In 2005, HPI Country Director Eduardo Sabio came to Kalinga and we discussed areas of possible partnership. When I presented the IAT's peace advocacy, he suggested that we design a project that would foster peace among tribes. After several consultations with the families, we submitted our proposal. On June 30, 2006,

"I cannot work in my field when our tribe is at war. There were times our family ran out of food because I was not able to plant anything."

- HPI project partner Juan Dammay



HPI partner Maryongan Annaway and his grandson with the carabao they received from Heifer. (photo by MM Umali)

HPI approved the GIFT for PEACE project and we are very delighted to be the first partner under their new beginning."

GIFT for PEACE aims to help end the poverty of 40 families in Kalinga and eventually bring peace and stronger relations among tribes through passing on the gifts. The project will start with 20 Tulgao families in the village of Nambaran and 20 Basao families in Dilag. They will receive the gifts of cattle, water buffalo, chickens, seeds and seedlings, farm tools. They will also be given training on sustainable agriculture and group savings and more importantly, on values such as Heifer's Cornerstones. After three years, the two tribes will pass on their gifts and knowledge to each other and other Kalinga tribes.

IAT chose the tribes because of their genuine need. "The Basaos in Dilag really needs assistance as they are one of the most neglected groups - no other development or religious organization has helped them. Also, the Tulgaos and Basaos are among the fiercest tribes in Kalinga. They would work as very good models and advocates of inter-tribal peace when they pass on their gifts" Sison stated.



HPI project partner Immagay Dalog shows the chickens she received from Heifer. (photo by MM Umali)

Sison admits though that IAT had a difficulty in convincing the two tribes to work together and give gifts to each other. During the first meetings, each tribe would stay in separate spots. "It was tense because both tribes knew about Peter's father. We also had a hard time explaining to them the passing on approach. They asked: why not pass on our gifts to our own tribesmen? But we explained that it is crucial to establish friendship with other tribes. They eventually realized the importance of passing on. After the Cornerstones Workshop, everyone was eager to work for the success of the project," he said.

At the start of all HPI projects, families attend several training programs and workshops to ensure that they are prepared to take care of their gifts and pass these on to others who are in need. The first to be conducted is the Cornerstones Workshop, wherein the importance of Heifer's PASSING on the GIFTS and other values are discussed and incorporated in the planning of all project activities.

According to Ruben, Heifer's unique approach of including values in its projects is very effective. "Most development interventions focus on giving only material inputs to address lack of resources. What is beautiful about Heifer's approach is that it also addresses one's poverty of values. If you analyze poverty, it is not only the lack of material or financial resources. Most of the time, poverty is the lack of morals and positive outlook in life. No one really is destitute, although millions of people around the world lack opportunities. If you try to develop a poor person's desire for a better life and world and give him even one opportunity, his condition greatly improves," he stated.

Sison agrees and says that strengthening the positive values of people is crucial in working for progress. "As a local NGO in Kalinga, we are invited several times during each development planning for the province where everybody would talk about tourism and business here. But for us in IAT, how can these even take off if we do not address peace and order? Sadly in this province, even professionals tolerate tribal wars. There are medical doctors, lawyers, accountants, and teachers. They are educated and some are even members of religious organizations but their attitude towards tribal wars is wrong and they even initiate conflicts. They do not practice positive values which

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- HPI partner Ruben Wacas



The relationship of the Tulgao and Basao tribes greatly improved with the help of Heifer's GIFTS for PEACE project. Photo shows the Tulgao tribe, with Peter at the left front, performing a traditional dance in the village of the Basaos. (photo by MM Umali)

are very important. The beauty of Heifer's Cornerstones is that they touch the heart of a person and encourage him to change and work for the better, and now we see two of the fiercest and poorest tribes saying no to tribal wars" he said.

Martin says that the Cornerstones will indeed help. "Even if there is *bodong* between two tribes, their relationship is still tense and members keep their distance. We have plenty of intermarriages but only the immediate families are close, not the whole tribe. For me, our province still has a long way to go before all tribal wars completely end. But one thing we can do is to change the values of people and raise their awareness on what tribal wars really bring. And this is where the Cornerstones can help."

For Peter, the Cornerstones are as valuable as the animals, seeds, and tools he received from Heifer. "The Cornerstones helped me to let go of my anger and desire for revenge. They made me aware of the value of caring for others. It is in the tradition of our tribe that once you share a meal with an enemy, you consider him as your close brother. Our tribe had a

*bodong* with the Basaos, but my anger was still there so I intentionally avoided sharing meals with any of them. Now that I understood the Cornerstones, I am ready to invite them in my house for a meal and share the gifts I received," said Peter.

### **Eager to pass on**

The HPI-IAT partner families have just received their gifts last December. They still have a lot to do before they increase their income and totally rise from poverty. They have yet to form their savings group, plant their agroforestry gardens, learn how to better care for their animals, and undergo several community training programs. But each one is already looking forward to the day they will pass on. Juan said that he is excited because the passing on will "strengthen our ties and improve the image of our tribes."

The two tribes are also closer now. "At this early stage, the relationship between the two has greatly improved. In the joint meetings and training we conduct for the project, they freely mingle with one another and even exchange jokes," said Sison.

True indeed, when the HPI group met the partner families for a meeting in Dilag, it was hard to identify who belonged to their respective tribes. Peter was shaking hands with a Basao elder while the two project group leaders were exchanging ideas on how to better feed their animals. The other Basaos were showing the Tulgaos around their community and before the meeting started, the two tribes danced a traditional number together. It may still be three years before they pass on their gifts to one another, but peace has already started. (Mariane M. Umali)

**"The Cornerstones helped me to let go of my anger and desire for revenge. They made me aware of the value of caring for others." - Peter Bangngayon**



Peter has learned to let go of his desire for revenge and is now a close friend of the Basaos. Photo shows Peter (right) with Basao elder and HPI partner Mosling Dammay. (photo by MM Umali)



Stronger ties. HPI project group leaders Juan Dammay (left) and Martin Wayaway (right) now regard each other as close brothers though they belong to different tribes. (photo by MM Umali)

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