

# Together, We Can !

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## GREEN VILLAGE

Special Edition

## LAND AHoy !

Admittedly the Green Village project has not been all smooth sailing! But as you are already aware, at LP4Y we enjoy a challenge because we know that ... *"I can't, but together we can!"* And here we have a great illustration of that approach.

**Falling down so we can stand up stronger!** As explained in the first Green Village newsletter, in July 2014 typhoon Glenda destroyed all the pilot buildings and constructions built by the Young Adults at Eco-Construction. A few months later, in October, we learnt that the donation of land which had been promised at the beginning of the project had fallen through. So we had to put behind us all thoughts of those 2 hectares situated right in the middle of the resettlement area in Ayala Land, which had seemed so perfect.

**Local support.** But we had reckoned without our local partners who immediately came to the aid of the Green Village, such as our numerous contacts in the Don Bosco community and in the Barangays (neighborhoods) of Dayap and Santo Tomas, as well as the offer of land made by Habitat for Humanity, and an offer of a plot of land on Site 3 from the National Housing Authority. The Mayor of Calauan, George Berris, who is an active defender of the poor, contacted us almost immediately to talk of a government-owned plot of land situated in the Barangay of Lamot 2. A few days later, government lawyer and administrator Atty. Rebenal, equally drawn to the project, helped us present the project to the Governor of the Province of Laguna himself, Gov. Ramil L. Hernandez. He was won over, as were we! The plot has a great deal of potential.

**A valuable distance.** The new plot is situa-

### Editorial

The collaboration between LP4Y and CHL (Coopération Humanitaire Luxembourg) has strengthened over recent months and I have been fortunate enough to visit the dynamic LP4Y teams in the Philippines.

My daughter Anne and I were warmly welcomed in Manila by Gaëlle and Lucie who took us to LP4Y's project at Smokey Mountain, and to the Tondo Center. I took advantage of this opportunity to interview Gaëlle, who is in charge of the Green Village development project in the Philippines, and I discovered a committed young woman who is waiting for just one thing: the green light that will allow her to throw herself wholly into this new adventure.

A week ago Jean-Marie and I visited the Luxembourg Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes (MAE) where we met Mr. Frank Mertens, the government official respon-

sible for cooperation with NGOs, including LP4Y. Mr. Mertens has been put in charge of the co-financing application filed by CHL and LP4Y for the Green Village program, for a total of €450,000. We have thus taken the first step in our request for co-financing, and assuming there are no delays the file should be dealt with before the summer vacation.

I am confident that the MAE will give our request a favorable response and that we will at long last be able to launch our partnership.

### François PRUM

President, NGO Coopération Humanitaire Luxembourg (CHL)



ted 10 minutes from the relocation sites by public transport, which in fact offers the Young Adults a rare and welcome opportunity to set foot outside their usual environment and to see the world beyond. This has turned out to be of great benefit, allowing them to practice the professional behavior that LP4Y teaches. This fact will without doubt enable the Young Adults to evolve more quickly.

**In harmony with the environment.** The new site is near the Crisis Center for Children, allowing LP4Y to attract a new population through contact with these adolescents. There is also the hope that this contact might create new opportunities for projects involving these children and the Young Adults from LP4Y, many of whom express a desire to work with children from backgrounds similar to their own. Another neighbor is the Wildlife Animals Rescue Center, whose mission of wildlife protection comple-

ments that of the Green Village. From the Green Village people will be able to observe Philippine animals such as the carabao, or water buffalo, which work the rice terraces. Finally the plot is also close to the organic farm at Lamot 2, another project whose goals reflect those of our own training eco-center.

**A pearl of nature.** This new plot of 4.7 hectares contains several fruit trees which will be used by the Green Program for making the jams and fruit juices which they sell at local businesses and bazaars. In addition the trees provide shade to the buildings, thus contributing to the bioclimatic design. And finally, it offers a magnificent view of the mountains and of Laguna Bay.

**On-going.** Surveyors are currently evaluating the topography and adapting the original plans to this new terrain to enable us to sign a final agreement for the loan of the land

## THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABORS

**The second prototype of the Training Room for the Green Village has just been successfully completed by the Young Adults of the Eco-construction program, under supervision by specialists. This valuable experience has given them renewed enthusiasm for learning and also for construction of the real Green Village.**

**It's a tangible achievement!** The new Training Room stands proudly between the mountains and Site 2's numerous basketball courts so characteristic of Southville 7's landscape. This 35 m<sup>2</sup> showcase stands 5.5m high and reflects the skills and motivation of the Young Adults who only a few months ago saw themselves as incapable and lacking in any talent.

**Anchoring the building.** This may be an eco-village, but the use of a certain amount of concrete is essential when building in the Philippines where the weather can turn extreme! We started building on January 26, 2014. The Young Adults were assisted by building specialists who taught them the best techniques when working with concrete. It was decided to build on top of the original structure, keeping as much of it as possible (for economy's sake). As a result the first stage was not the most enjoyable; it consisted of destroying certain parts of the original foundations in order to dig deeper foundations which would be strengthened with thicker metal reinforcements. The difference this time was that this metal framework could be soldered to metal supports which could in turn hold the four bamboos which make up each of the 6 supporting pillars. These specially designed supports allow the bamboo to take the lateral strain and maintain perfect balance. There is a concrete slab raised up 30cm, just in case of flooding. All done, in just 3 weeks!

**Building with bamboo.** The first step was to carefully select the lengths of matinik, a variety of bamboo we have chosen to use from now on for all structural parts of the Green Village. This variety is known as the best structural bamboo in the Philippines. The Young Adults began working with bamboo under the supervision of local experts in bamboo construction who patiently explained Filipino techniques and skills. They started by building the columns which support the whole structure of the building. So from the very first cut made with the saw, everything had to be just right! Then for three weeks they worked on the frame, and also the first wall. This frame included numerous braces to ensure a balanced distribution of mechanical stress. The Young Adults learned how to connect one section of bamboo to another, using pegs made of matinik and nylon cords and /or rattan (natural fibers made using the outside casing of lengths of bamboo). Next the roof structure was added, followed by nipa palm leaves woven together and covered by netting to give the nipa a longer life. Meanwhile on the lower floor bamboo braces took up entire walls. The lateral roofs were raised (but not attached to the main structure, to avoid the whole roof being ripped off during a typhoon), and the two doors



were made by the team, rather than being bought as originally planned; with bamboo everything is possible!

**Organization.** 2-5 specialized workers (in addition to the Eco-construction coach) worked alongside the Young Adults to ensure a good learning environment in which the Young Adults can acquire the necessary techniques and skills. The Young Adults are organized into teams of 5 which alternate, allowing each team to work 2 and a half work days per week, in accordance with the LP4Y pedagogy. We had planned for the work to take 45 days; in fact it took three and a half months! That's all part of the learning process. You might be surprised to learn that the key words on this building site are: take your time; learn; optimize; repeat.

**Empowering the Young Adults.** Each member of the team is allocated multiple roles to give them maximum involvement in the project. They are involved in the design, tools and inventory, budgeting ... Furthermore, two of the Young Adults are given senior roles in the project, attending the weekly meetings with the Green Village Coordinator and all external meetings, and reporting back to the rest of the team.

**On-going.** The building work is complete and the final touches are now being added along with the electricity (LED light bulbs) and all fittings and furnishings. Benches, tables, shelving units, all made from bamboo by the Young Adults. They have to follow certain basic specifications but are otherwise given free rein in terms of design, and are encouraged to use their creativity to the full.

**A fruitful collaboration.** The generous aid received from EDF Energies Nouvelles has enabled us to finance the entire prototype, thus providing an exceptional learning experience. This represents the first step towards creating the Green Village and as such has enormous importance for the Young Adults working on this project, and for the LP4Y team. The funds donated will also finance the beginning of actual building in the Green Village in a few months' time, which will have a huge impact on the Young Adults and all the surrounding community.

**An impact beyond LP4Y.** LP4Y has had to adapt its buildings to the climatic constraints of the region and this new construction has benefitted from all the post-typhoon improvements. By building this teaching center where people can come together and share their ideas and skills, right in the heart of this deprived and isolated zone, LP4Y can play an important role in dynamic long-term local development. Moreover, this first construction will quickly take on a key role for the Calauan LPC: once the final details have been completed the space will be used for award ceremonies, for the Young Adults to present their Life Project Plans; and other events (partner events, films, exhibitions and community events ...). It will also be used to showcase the Green Village project to the local population.



A word from the coach

"Building the Training Room prototype has been an amazing opportunity for the Young Adults and for us, in terms of preparing for building the Green Village. Over the three and a half months of construction we were able to try out different techniques and improve our understanding of bamboo and our building skills using this material. The Young Adults became increasingly professional and showed great fortitude when we had to recommence building the walls, as well as showing exceptional enthusiasm for completing this fantastic structure of which they are now so proud. They jumped at the opportunity to develop new skills based on the techniques taught by the bamboo building experts. They now look fully confident when building simple structures or items of furniture, which they do with no need for supervision. As their coach I have been impressed by their responsible behavior and their initiative which have developed dramatically during their time on the site. Building this prototype has given them self-confidence, allowing them to show to others what they are capable of doing. And this was just a sample! They can't wait to take on the challenge of the real Green Village!"

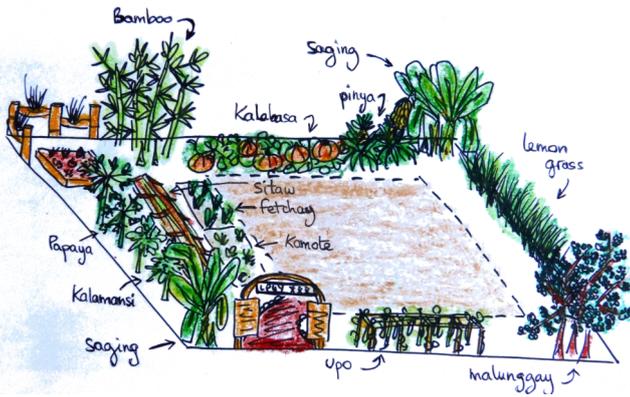
Loïc Blouin, 26, Coach for the Eco-Construction Program

## LATEST NEWS



**Community garden.** Work has begun on the fence which marks the boundary of the garden surrounding the Training Room. Meanwhile the Green Program team has just finished deciding what they will plant: papaya, kalamansi (calamondin), bananas, pineapples, sweet potatoes, beans, squash, malunggay (horseradish), zucchini, among others. There will even be a section of vertical garden (made of bamboo obviously). As with every activity this garden provides a learning opportunity, so the Young Adults have been given the challenge of acquiring as many as possible of the plants without buying them. Thus cuttings and seeds have already been collected from around and about, including from neighbors with small gardens. We've learnt not to throw away lettuce roots or the bases of pineapples! This is a new approach for the Young Adults who grew up in the slums of Manila where the idea of growing your own food is a foreign one, simply because it is not possible. This is also an opportunity to teach them about healthy eating.

**Mabuhay Ate Laurie and Kuya John!** In March the Young Adults and the volunteer team at Calauan were delighted to welcome Laure and Jean-Marc Delaporte, LP4Y's founders. This was a proud moment for the Young Adults who were able to show what they had achieved over the weeks, and receive the congratulations of our guests of honor! They are looking forward to seeing them again in June when they will be able to show them the completed pilot structure, as well as the new greenhouse ready to receive the organic herbs where they will demonstrate their gardening skills, and walk around the site of the Green Village in Lamot 2.



**Greenhouse prototype.** With the assistance of two experts the team has experimented with various ways of bending bamboo to create arches, and they have now begun work on the foundations on the site of the original greenhouse which was destroyed by the typhoon. Soon they will be able to start planting the herbs and spices which are the raw materials for the temporarily suspended Green Garden program.

## AN INSPIRING PROJECT



*Proud*

**"We have finished the Training Room, but also, having completed this initial project, we have learnt how to make bamboo benches and tables to furnish it. I'm proud of myself and of the Eco-construction team. Now I can make the connections that link 2 sections of bamboo with a peg, without help. I can also teach the new team members how to do it. Yesterday I taught Nami and Alvin how to make a bench, and they finished it themselves – I was just helping. Kuya Sonny (bamboo expert) used to do that with us when we were building the Training Room. He would take time to explain things to us.**

**I hope we will soon start work on the Green Village at the new site. I'm really grateful to the people who have provided funding for our project; they are really kind. Thanks to them we can start building."**

Justin, 19, Responsibility Step

**"When I first got to know the Green Village project I was surprised, because the project aims to do "big" things to enable "small" people to change their lives. I really liked the idea – it's an unbelievable opportunity for us."**

Eddie Boy, 21, Responsibility Step

*Surprised*



**"I'm so happy that the Governor has given us a new site where we can build the Green Village! Thank you to everyone who helps us; it's really important to us."**

Charmina, 24, Responsibility Step



*Sad*

**"I've found work so I'm happy; I'm going to be able to help my family ... but I'm sad because I won't get to build the Green Village with the others anymore."**

Antonino, 22, Ivoclar Vivadent employee

*Happy*



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