

Creative *Lupon*, meaningful results in Capiz

PD Helen Mestidio of DILG-Capiz has lots of stories to share about transforming relationships with LGUs in the province. But one story stands out in Barangay Bailan in the Municipality of Pontevedra.

In this part of the town, community disputes are settled not in the heat of confrontation, but through creative mediation and conciliation under the auspices of the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*.

We have a lot to offer other barangays in the Philippines based on the experience of the *Lupon* in Bailan, the PD shared, mostly increasing the reputation value of the *Lupon* and keeping the parties fully engaged in addressing disputes.

Unique ways have evolved from the *Lupon* experience in Bailan. It takes pride in settling 100% of all disputes filed at the barangay level. But what makes this peculiar is the extraordinary means by which the community manages dispute among residents.

First, the members of the *Lupon* are all respected members of the community, particularly coming from the roster of *maestros* and *maestras* in the barangay. The high credibility of, and years of experience by, educators and school administrators were put to good use in their work as *Lupon* members and conciliators. Their unparalleled roles and services paved the way to make the *Lupon* one of the most valuable social and political institutions in the barangay, as well as in Pontevedra and in Capiz.



Second, the settlement approach of Bailan is also one of a kind. To ensure full attendance by all parties concerned during conciliation meetings, the services of a barangay patrol vehicle are made available to and from the venue.

The *Lupon* has innovated through the Plant-a-Tree mechanism, where a respondent is asked to literally plant a tree as a gesture of redress and commitment to reform. Not only is the act pro-environment, it is also symbolic of willingness to make amends and start anew.

This approach, says PD Mestidio, has resulted in zero recurrence of cases settled. The tree will always be a reminder that parties concerned have moved on.

And such meaningful results have not gone unnoticed. Barangay Bailan went on to become national winners twice in a row. In 2010, it was awarded the most outstanding *Lupon* in the Philippines. The next year it placed second, a testament to the *Lupon's* innovation and outcomes.

Today the Provincial Director looks back with much appreciation. Bailan has set the mark that the community can do so much based on its own reservoir of reputation, commitment, and creativity.

The example of Bailan is unique, adds PD Mestidio, but it can be done anywhere in the Philippines.

