



EIU Best Practices Series **No. 37**

# Early Childhood and Elementary Education for Indigenous Learners Programme

Cartwheel Foundation  
EIU Best Practices 2014



**APCEIU**

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization  
국제연합  
교육과학문화기구

Asia-Pacific Centre of  
Education for International Understanding  
under the auspices of UNESCO  
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# Foreword

The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under the auspices of UNESCO was established in 2000, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, under the agreement between the Government of the Republic of Korea and UNESCO. As a Category 2 organization, APCEIU is “exercising its core function of fulfilling UNESCO’s mandate through various programmes of Education for International Understanding and Global Citizenship Education,” as Mme Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, kindly remarked during her visit to APCEIU on 3 February 2014.

As a leading centre for Education for International Understanding (EIU) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED), APCEIU has devoted itself to strengthening EIU and GCED capacities in the region by training teachers and teacher trainers, developing educational materials and programmes on EIU and GCED, and strengthening the network of educators, experts, civil society leaders, and other stakeholders in the region.

The EIU Best Practices aims to promote local initiatives in the 47 UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region and encourage innovative practices in different local contexts. Thanks to the continued support of National Commissions for UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific region as well as numerous local education practitioners, APCEIU has published and disseminated a variety of monographs over the past eight years. This year, two monographs and a collection of three cases are introduced with the series numbers 36, 37, and 38.

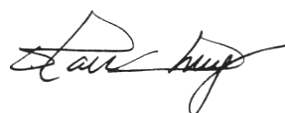
The following case, the Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) Programme authored by Mr. Bricks Sintaon from the Cartwheel Foundation,

Inc., is particularly focused on providing culturally relevant basic education for the indigenous Higaonon learners in the Philippines. As the programme values the indigenous traditions, wisdoms, and way of life, a significant amount of effort is spent to facilitate community involvement in each activity of the programme: community consultation, curriculum indigenization, teacher training, material development, and so on. The ultimate goal of the programme is to achieve full community ownership and self-sustainability of the ECEE programme. The way the programme creates a learning process for both sides, through openness, sharing, and collaboration is a pivotal element in EIU/GCED pedagogy.

I believe that through this programme, numerous good practices can be widely shared among the educators, scholars, policy makers, and activists who are committed to promote a Culture of Peace in the Asia-Pacific region. In doing so, I sincerely hope that EIU Best Practices will continue to inspire innovative initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Philippines National Commission for UNESCO and the Cartwheel Foundation, Inc. for their kind cooperation in sharing their experiences.

December 2014



Utak Chung  
Director

# EIU Best Practices is...

APCEIU has been committed to the promotion of a Culture of Peace since its inception, in line with one of the pillars of education “Learning to Live Together.” A Culture of Peace has been a key principle at the core of UNESCO’s ethical mission. It involves a set of values, attitudes and behaviors that can be taught, developed and improved upon to enhance mutual understanding and conflict resolution. Attaining a Culture of Peace requires transformation of institutional practices, as well as individual values and behaviors in which education plays a crucial role in the process. As a major educational tool aimed at promoting a Culture of Peace, EIU addresses issues related to cultural diversity, globalization, social justice, human rights, peace, and sustainable development. It focuses on increasing the capacity of learners to deal with issues of everyday life, to resolve community conflict, and to enjoy human, political, and civil rights to a greater extent.

APCEIU launched EIU Best Case Studies in 2006 in cooperation with the UNESCO Member States in the region to encourage educators, scholars, and activists to implement and share local initiatives on EIU. It is an outreach programme that invites them to share their efforts in promoting education for a culture of peace in different social and cultural contexts. Now renamed as EIU Best Practices in order to further encourage the participation of practitioners in the field, the programme seeks to promote and collect innovative practices based on optimal classroom conditions and activities, school climate, community, and social atmosphere, disseminating them throughout the region.

The programme is conducted through the following steps: 1) Call for Applications: APCEIU sends announcement letters along with application forms

and guidelines to the 47 National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO field offices, major National Institutes of Education in the region, and APCEIU's MOU partners in the region; 2) Screening and Selection: Submitted applications are reviewed by the Screening Committee, composed of experts, who then select the best practices; 3) Field Visit: APCEIU staff undertake field visits to the programme sites of the selected cases to confer the EIU Best Practices awards, conduct field observation and interviews and provide the selected applicants with the guidelines for the final report; 4) Submission of the Final Reports: Selected applicants submit the final reports to APCEIU based on the guidelines; and 5) Publication and Dissemination: Final reports are published as a monograph series and disseminated throughout Asia and the Pacific region.

Given the favorable and enthusiastic responses from the region and support from the National Commissions for UNESCO, APCEIU wishes to expand the positive momentum built thus far and to further its efforts for the coming years. APCEIU encourages educators, scholars, and activists from the Asia-Pacific region to apply and share their experiences and perspectives. The Centre expects that through the EIU Best Practices, diverse practices of EIU will be widely shared throughout the entire region and beyond, thus contributing towards achieving a Culture of Peace.

Bricks Sabella Sintaon is an indigenous Talaandig from Miarayon, Talakag, Bukidnon, Philippines. He is a former college grantee of Cartwheel Foundation, Inc. (CFI) who graduated among the pioneer batch of Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples' Education-University of Southeastern Philippines with a degree in Elementary Education, specializing in Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Education.

He has rendered service through teaching in his own community in his first two years after graduating in 2010. Thereafter, he moved to Manila to pursue his dream in cultural dance. He was instead led back to CFI as Education Coordinator for the many programmes of the organization. Since then, he has nurtured his expertise in development work advancing CFI's advocacy of culturally-relevant education for IPs around the country.

In 2014, he spearheaded the reopening a community-based day-care centre in his hometown, Miarayon, for their very young learners. With support from other CFI grantee-graduates and the learners' parents, the centre continues to operate solely from the efforts of community members themselves.

With his background as an IP himself, he has a natural gift to build good relationships with CFI's many partner indigenous communities, making progress towards their shared goals.





# Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the Higaonon Community of Sinakungan, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur for their dedication to our collaborative work, in the process manifesting how collective effort truly leads to meaningful impact.

We would especially like to acknowledge the elders and other community members for their willing attendance and cooperation in carrying out relevant activities especially during their cultural gathering every week.

We are grateful to the para-teachers and our local community organizer who have taken the lead in the day-to-day implementation of plans and activities in the community.

We would also like to thank the Indigenous Peoples' Apostolate (IPA) and the division office of the Department of Education (DepEd) for their counterpart as local partners on the ground, whom we have been in constant coordination with in making progress with our programme. We also would like to acknowledge members of the local Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) of Sinakungan who have shown their support to the community by assuring peace and security within their area.

We also recognize the invaluable contribution of our funding partners, Global Fund for Children and other individual donors, whose support has helped sustain the programme throughout the years.

We are so grateful for the opportunity that our organization has been given to look back, assess, and document our learnings and experiences from our

involvement with the Higaonon of Sinakungan, so that these too may be shared with others who work for the cause of Indigenous Peoples' Education. We are honored to be contributors to the publication of the EIU Best Practices and are grateful to the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) for making this possible.

It is our sincerest hope that with this publication, we can contribute to efforts towards peaceful community-building and help people around the world better understand the realities and uniqueness of education in an indigenous community setting.

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# Early Childhood and Elementary Education for Indigenous Learners Programme

## 1. Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Outline of the Programme

Indigenous Filipinos are amongst the devastating numbers of indigenous peoples (IP) that continue to suffer the effects of loss due to colonization, including current educational programme and delivery systems (Young, 2002). There are approximately 110 ethnic tribes in the Philippines (10% of total population of 88 million people) that continue to live through these varying states of cultural extinction (Abejuela, n.d.). They can be found in the interiors and mountains of Luzon, Mindanao, Negros, Samar, Leyte, and the Palawan and Sulu group of islands.

They are one of the most marginalized sectors and have been neglected, isolated, and overtaken by development. Over time, they have experienced the destruction of their habitats, the imposition of settlers in their ancestral domains, and retreats to interiors and mountains away from basic social services. For the IP, their land is life. As they struggle to keep their land, they fight for life. As a result, the incidence of poverty and malnutrition among them is significantly higher than the national average. In terms of education, the IP are among those with the lowest literacy rates: most government and private institutions are unable to serve the needs of the communities living in remote areas, and standard education programs fail to take into account their language, culture and traditions.

The indigenous Higaonon of Sinakungan, Esperanza, Agusan Del Sur is one of the many ethnic groups in Mindanao. Sinakungan is known as the heart of the Higaonon because it is where their Holy Mountain is located. The Holy

Mountain is believed to have been the dwelling place of the “Ininay” and “Inamay,” or mother and father of their entire lineage.

Up until the present, they are still practicing rituals based on their cultural beliefs and traditions. Sinakungan is where the traditional lifeways of the Higaonon from around the country are still being purely practiced.



▲ *Some of the rituals performed by the Higaonon elders involve the sharing of pig’s meat (left) and uniting man and woman as married couple.*

The Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) Programme focuses on facilitating access to quality and culturally-relevant early childhood and elementary education for the Higaonon indigenous children of Sinakungan, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. Quality is achieved by ensuring that teachers are equipped with the right skills and methods, whereas cultural relevance comes with the indigenization of curriculum. The ultimate goal is to see the existing schools being run independently by proactive members of the partner communities.

## 1.2 Rationale and Background Information of the Programme

The ECEE Programme for indigenous learners in the community of Sinakungan, Agusan del Sur, Philippines was originally authored by Cartwheel Foundation.

Sinakungan is one of the farthest barangays in the province that has very little access to basic social services because of its geographic location. The Indigenous Peoples’ Apostolate (IPA) of the Diocese of Butuan responded to indigenous

Higaonon families' expressed need of having education for their children. In 1997, the IPA opened a culture-based literacy programme for the young learners in the area. Due to limited financial resources then, it could not be sustained.

From 2009 to present, Cartwheel Foundation has been implementing the ECEE Programme for the Higaonon children of Sinakungan, in partnership with the IPA and the Mary Mediatrix of All Grace Foundation, Inc. Since 2012, Cartwheel has been the direct implementer of the ECEE Programme at Sinakungan with the IPA lending their technical assistance.

The Global Fund for Children has supported the ECEE programme by providing supplementary funding for five consecutive school years already (2009-present). Metrobank Foundation, Inc. helped sustain a portion of the direct costs of the programme in the school year 2012-2013. The Philippine Medical Association of Metropolitan Washington DC has contributed to the programme as well, providing significant support especially for the learners' supplemental feeding since school year 2013-2014.

## 2. Description of the Programme/Case

### 2.1 Goals and Objectives

#### **Programme goal:**

Accessible and culturally relevant education for all Higaonon children of Sinakungan, Agusan del Sur, through the implementation of a community-run Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) programme and other supplementary learning mechanisms

#### **Programme objectives:**

1. To strengthen community ownership of preschool and elementary school
2. To improve indigenized ECEE curriculum for Higaonon children through the integration of culture and arts as core components
3. To increase access of teachers, learners, and other community members to relevant educational materials and other community learning mechanisms
4. To increase the number of trained teachers/para-teachers who are competent in modern teaching strategies and are sensitive to the needs of the Higaonon
5. To increase community involvement in the education of their children

6. To decrease absenteeism among children due to lack of food through the provision of daily supplemental feeding

## 2.2 Activities in Detail

The programme's direct beneficiaries are approximately 65 Higaonon children for 2014-2015 school year while the indirect beneficiaries are approximately 350 members of the same Higaonon tribe, residing in the same community.

Each programme cycle follows the required number of school months commissioned by the Department of Education (DepEd) of the Philippines. Like all other schools registered under DepEd, DOP Sinakungan IP School opens in June and ends in March with each school year having ten months in total.

Sinakungan is a forest mountain community located in one of the most remote areas in the province of Agusan del Sur. Esperanza is the nearest town center where the indigenous Higaonon purchase most of their supplies such as rice and other food. The travel from Sinakungan to Esperanza requires more than half a day involving a two-hour trek, then a four-hour motorcycle ride to the next community, and finally crossing a river through boat. Apart from being tedious and time-consuming, renting transportation for travel is also expensive. Due to these barriers, only a few assigned community members go to the town center once a month to purchase supplies.



▲ *Travelling to the Higaonon community in Sinakungan requires more than a day wherein one hikes through the mountains on foot, crosses a river on boat, and rides through muddy highlands on a motorbike loaded with supplies*





▲ Houses in the mountain community of Sinakungan are mostly made of wood sourced from the forests of which they are part

The specific activities integral in the implementation of ECEE programme are outlined below:

#### 1) Community consultation

Cartwheel upholds the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. At the start of its collaboration with each community, Cartwheel conducts a planning workshop with community members. Four aspects are tackled, namely: culture and tradition, community vision, current realities, and competencies identification. The workshop paves the way for the community to identify programmes based on their needs and the different action points to be undertaken in partnership with Cartwheel. This planning process also includes developing a sustainability plan for the continuity of the programmes after Cartwheel's implementation period. It also makes way for their full ownership of the programmes in due time.

#### 2) Curriculum indigenization

Cartwheel recognizes the indigenous communities themselves as their own valuable resource. They have established age-old systems that guide the unique development towards a culturally relevant educational programme. Cartwheel ensures that community members provided input in designing the programmes. Curriculum indigenization efforts that integrate indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs) and culture are also facilitated.

Cartwheel has been able to develop a curriculum for the early childhood learners of Sinakungan that is culturally sensitive and appropriate to the learners' level of learning. The elementary learners follow the DepEd curriculum; Cartwheel

facilitates the implementation of IP Education principles through teaching strategies and/or techniques that are responsive and relevant to the current realities of the Higaonon indigenous people.

### 3) Teacher training

Focus is given for the continued learning of para-teachers through appropriate IP Education training. All four of them are members of the Higaonon community, most of whom are not college graduates, much less formally trained in education. The training enables them to efficiently implement the indigenized curriculum that meet the needs of the learners and the community.



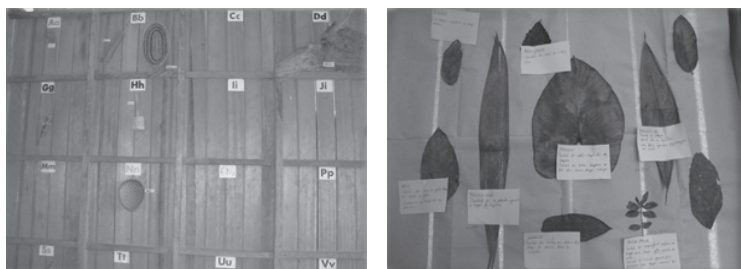
▲ Activities in preparing for classes are teachers' trainings (left) and enlisting for enrolment (right)

### 4) Materials development

Aside from the indigenized curriculum, the development of more indigenized instructional materials have also been targeted. The school has already begun to employ innovative Learning Corners: a creative strategy to develop and refine the skills of learners while integrating indigenous culture and framework of multiple intelligences. Teachers are encouraged to use manipulatives to support teaching and learning by using materials from their own community.



▲ Materials for Mathematics are counting sticks from bamboo (left) and twigs from trees (right)



▲ Around classroom walls are objects sourced from around the community: an alphabet wall with real objects and its corresponding names (left) and a leaf chart complete with descriptions (right)

### 5) Tribal Education Council

The success and sustainability of the programme also relies on community involvement. The Tribal Education Council (TEC), composed of elders and other community members, is a platform where they can gather weekly for culture-sharing even among non-learners. This is organized with the support of the para-teachers for the nurturing of their Higaonon culture that it may continuously be valued and kept alive for generations to come. With or without the teacher, the community members are encouraged to gather regularly and celebrate various parts of their unique Higaonon identity.

The TEC has also helped in implementing the programme by ensuring parent participation in the school such as making school repairs, cleaning the surrounding area of the school, and helping in the feeding programme through cooking and contributing vegetables. The TEC has created three committees, namely: (1) culture committee, (2) education committee, and (3) sustainability committee. Each of them has been given specific roles. Their involvement is vital to sustain the literacy programme on their own in the near future.



▲ The Higaonon of Sinakungan attend a community meeting at their tribunal (left), while many others take part in “Brigada Eskwela” where they clean up around the school before the opening of classes (right)

### 6) Supplemental feeding

The supplemental feeding programme directly contributes to the physical and mental development of the students, as well as ensuring that the learners stay in school. With proper feeding and nutrition, not only will students' nutritional well-being increase, but their disposition for learning and active participation will improve.



▲ Some of the learners' school activities include morning assemblies (left) and the feeding programme where volunteer-parents lend a hand in meal preparation and distribution (right)

### 7) Monitoring and evaluation

Cartwheel conducts monitoring and evaluation of the programmes regularly. This is done through visits, focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys across all sectors of the community.

## 2.3 Relevance to Education for International Understanding

Education for International Understanding (EIU) is defined as the process where an individual continually learns to develop as part of a community, recognizing interdependence among all as bound by humanity's universal values, without neglecting the cultural identities in the region (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1974).

The ECEE Programme in Sinakungan is holistic in its approach by involving various community members and integrating indigenous traditions and culture into all lessons. The involvement of all the key players—teachers, trainers, community members, learners—resulted in the dynamic flow of information, skills, and practices. Giving importance to traditional knowledge—especially the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples and integrating local traditions and perspectives in the curriculum—in line with EIU principles.

The ways in which thematic areas of EIU are highlighted through varying approaches within the programme are outlined below:

### 1) Peace and Human Rights

It is worth noting that UNICEF has recognized education as having a key role in peacebuilding: “[It] is deeply implicated in processes of socialization and identity formation, which are vital for economic growth and individual and national advancement and can act as an important vehicle for social cohesion... Development through the education sector represent a very important part of this transformative process, with huge potential to impact positively or negatively” (UNICEF, 2011). With the honing of character through education, transformation is achieved not solely on the individual level but for community and greater society as well.

Two of the eight action areas of the United Nations’ Culture of Peace programme (“Declaration on a Culture of Peace,” 1999) are undertaken with ECEE’s implementation.

For one, working towards “education for all” without discrimination in itself already promotes peace. Especially in engaging indigenous peoples, neither gender nor ethnic background should discourage one to pursue quality education. As is the case for the Higaonon in Sinakungan where the distance and travel from the nearest town center with all other education institutions has always been a challenge, Cartwheel Foundation with its local partners had decided early on for the ECEE programme to thrive within the community itself. All teachers who have been working directly with the learners and their parents are Higaonon themselves – recognized as members of the community they serve, and raised in the same indigenous lifeways as the children they teach. There are lesser reasons for teacher or learner to be indifferent to each other primarily because of their shared background, and more reasons for working towards inclusive growth beginning at the school level.

Another action area highlighted involves the promotion of a “dialogue among civilizations,” favouring vulnerable groups such as indigenous people. As one of the ECEE activities detailed above, community consultation has long been prioritized as necessary for strengthening the programme’s significance and sustainability. Cartwheel, as the main implementer, recognizes that the community’s consent expressed at the beginning cannot be the sole basis for

running the programme. Though it may entail more effort or even expenses, the indigenous Higaonon community members are engaged as partners with given opportunity to be active in decision-making and determining directions for ECEE in their own area.

Regular community meetings where various concerns are discussed have the Tribal Education Council or TEC (detailed above) as their main platform. It is with this practice of constant consultation where development workers and community members they serve are made to see situations in the others' perspective, therefore wisely agreeing upon sound decisions in the end. One example wherein community consultation through meetings has been most effective is in coordinating feeding for ECEE learners. Parents and other members team up to efficiently prepare, cook, and distribute supplemental food among learners on a regular basis throughout the school year.

It is also through constant consultation with the community that the rights of the Higaonon of Sinakungan are recognized, both as fellow humans and as indigenous peoples. It is in respecting their freedom of speech and belief that their worth and dignity as humans are upheld. Though not explicitly taught in class, there is recognition of the Indigenous People's Rights Act ("Republic Act No. 8371," 1997) particularly in the practice of meeting with community members to ensure they give their "free, prior, and informed consent" regarding programme matters directly involving them.

Based on the curriculum framework, the Higaonon rights as an ethnic group are also upheld in recognizing their ancestral domain as a central theme in their way of life and education. Indigenous peoples regard their inherited land as the main source of life, especially for the Higaonon who have been practicing traditional upland farming through the years. Land also is seen as a unifying power-connecting past, present, and future generations to each other as the most important inheritance that may be passed on, and is collectively for the benefit of all in the community (UNESCO, 2010). Recognition of the Higaonon's ownership of their own land is giving due importance to their heritage as indigenous peoples as well, thus the relevance in making ancestral domain a guiding theme for all aspects of the ECEE programme.

## 2) Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report,

“Our Common Future,” defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It may be argued that indigenous peoples are role models in maintaining sustainability of their own rich natural resources in particular, as they often use their knowledge of nature not to exploit but to co-exist (UNESCO, 2010).

Two principles on which sustainable development is based on are highlighted in the approach of the ECEE programme, recognizing the “vital role of indigenous peoples in their own development.” Collective responsibility is practiced as community members are encouraged to take on active roles in any or all of the three TEC committees mentioned in the detailed activities above. Their shared tasks include facilitating regular culture-sharing among the young and old, attending to various needs that arise from the programme, and ideally coordinating among themselves for eventual full ownership and long-term programme sustainability.

This is directly related to the second principle on long-term perspective and broad-based participation. Even as Cartwheel and other local proponents have come in as development partners, gradual steps are taken each year in moving towards building the community’s capacity to sustain the ECEE programme on their own. As of the writing of this report, coordination with Sinakungan’s local parish IP ministry has been on-going to prepare requirements necessary for the Department of Education (DepEd) of the Philippines to finally give formal accreditation for the programme. Once achieved, sufficient resources to sustain the programme may well be assured with the said government agency having direct involvement in its implementation. Even as Cartwheel, the local partners, and the community of Sinakungan have yet to reach that stage, the time at present is utilized in training the teachers on various strategies and approaches that are very much in line with Higaonon indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices. This is to assure their readiness in keeping the IP Education approach integral to the programme, when the time of transitioning from development partners to the government finally comes.

Chronic hunger and malnutrition as major challenges in attaining sustainable development are addressed through the supplemental feeding aspect of the ECEE programme. As the Higaonon in Sinakungan usually experience food shortage in the months of April to September when harvest is scarce, the regular feeding of schoolchildren, made possible by Cartwheel’s development partners, helps



learners by providing them with one free meal every weekday, indirectly supporting their families.

### 3) Globalization and Cultural Diversity

The 2000 Millennium Summit released a report on the adverse effects of globalization and what can be done to counter it, mentioning that the “integrity of cultures and sovereignty of states may be at stake...To survive and thrive, a global economy must have a more solid foundation in shared values and institutional practices – it must advance broader and more inclusive social purposes.”

Although many indigenous communities reside in the most remote areas and may have very little connection with the world around them, it can never be denied that they too may be affected by the very rapid move towards globalization. Hence, indigenous culture is regarded as an integral part of the ECEE programme. Even as it is shared and lived in by all members of their ethnic group, culture is recognized as contributing significantly to an individual's inner growth (UNESCO, 1982).

Integration of their own unique culture into the ECEE programme is accomplished through two means: (1) use of the indigenized curriculum, and (2) culture-sharing sessions as part of TEC. Curriculum development is led by Cartwheel's education coordinator, a member of an indigenous community himself. The outline of main topics was drawn from competencies released by DepEd, but it was definitely not produced single-handedly. Especially for its cultural integration aspect that matches each of the topics, collaboration with the Higaonon teachers and the rest of the community remained necessary. Lesson plans are drafted and executed again integrating the cultural aspect as its main foundation – examples and/or situations discussed are those known by the community, and even educational materials created are made from materials naturally sourced from around the community as well.

Culture-sharing during TEC gatherings are initiated by the teachers but are mainly facilitated by the community elders themselves. When it was first introduced, the sessions began as informal meetings; they now have taken on more structure, with the community elders agreeing to meet the learners for an hour every Friday and the teachers putting down into writing whatever is shared. The documentation is mainly used by the teachers as reference for the cultural integration part in their lessons, but may also be compiled as a written collection



of their various lifeways as indigenous Higaonon.

As gatherings have become more regular, community members claimed that the practice of their rituals and traditions have become all the more sacred in turn. It is with the heightened awareness of having to pass these on to the younger generations that the children are now more constantly involved in their indigenous practices. There is more conscious effort in explaining the meaning of each act and no longer take the children's presence for granted. In this way, a much deeper appreciation of the richness of Higaonon culture is nurtured in both young and old.

### **3. Conclusion**

#### **3.1 Evaluation and Critical Reflection**

It has been a joy for Cartwheel's education coordinator, who himself hails from an indigenous group in Southern Philippines, to be part of the process of community development through education for the Higaonon of Sinakungan. It was easier and more natural for him to understand the lifeways of the Higaonon because of the commonalities they share as indigenous peoples. As one who leads in teacher training and curriculum development by assuring that it is culturally relevant to the specific communities of the programme, it is recognized that the involvement of both teachers and the people in the community play a crucial role in establishing this holistic approach.

Though sounding passé to others, he has realized that there is great value in ultimately putting people over projects and relationships over results. It is in acknowledging shared humanity that individuals who make up a community build each other up, and move forward together. Though admittedly challenging, the service rendered for the Higaonon of Sinakungan has become doubly meaningful for him as he aspires to bring back a similar educational programme to his hometown in Mirayon, Bukidnon where the indigenous Talaandig reside.

Detailed below are his objective evaluations of the ECEE programme in Sinakungan:

#### **Strengths**

Cartwheel has seen the value in working directly and consistently being in close

coordination with the community members. Those identified with adequate competence to serve as teachers are trained and fulfill a double role of being both educator and community organizer. Since the teachers Cartwheel works with are all from the community itself, they naturally and more easily build good relations with the rest of the members.

Teachers are already capable of teaching in the Mother Tongue, creating a beneficial impact for the children in making the lessons be understood clearly. In addition, the teachers who know the unique culture and lifeways of the Higaonon can better pass on knowledge to their children, and even link these to more general topics to aid in better understanding and retention.



▲ Various classes inside the classrooms of DOP Sinakungan Indigenous Peoples' School

The Tribal Education Council (TEC) remains a key factor in programme implementation. As it contributes to the children's learning through weekly culture-sharing, a more regular transfer of indigenous knowledge between old and young is facilitated, and also a deeper appreciation for the indigenous Higaonon's own unique heritage. Engaging community elders as identified leaders for the TEC has also been effective in making sure all programme efforts are still aligned with what the Higaonon envisions for themselves.

### **Limitations**

Though many of the elders have openly expressed their willingness to contribute to the programme, tribal conflict among leaders in the community has hindered the participation of the parent-members in school activities at certain times. Other community members are also affected by the disagreements among the leaders.

There has been no effort yet from the community in raising funds to cover costs

for programme sustainability. The geographical location of the community as being up in the mountains and having difficult accessibility poses a related challenge. Transportation costs in and out of the area of Sinakungan is very expensive; if they sell their products in the nearest town, their income would only be enough for the many land transfers they need to go back home.

As of this writing, DepEd has only recognized DOP Sinakungan IP School, while the accreditation process has yet to progress. It is ideal that DepEd becomes more involved mainly in planning for and working towards programme sustainability. It is Cartwheel's hope that once DepEd together with the community finally take over the programme, the indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices of the Higaonon will remain integrated into all subject matter.

### **3.2 Impacts on the Target Groups, School, and/ or Larger Community**

#### **Enhanced knowledge and skills**

In the settlement of Sinakungan in Esperanza, Agusan Del Sur, 55 students from Pre-school to Grade 6 have to access education whereas, typically, they would be expected to help out in the fields with their parents even at an early age. As of the 2nd grading period of school year (SY) 2013-2014, 70% of pre-school and kindergarten pupils, and 100% of Grade 1 to 6 students, have passed learning standards, including reading and writing. In addition, the relative structure of the school setting has also encouraged the children to observe proper hygiene, practice discipline in going about their tasks, and build confidence in interacting with different kinds of people even those from outside their community.

#### **Fostered cultural rootedness**

As in the past, the students' rootedness to their cultural heritage, on top of academic achievement, has been a key goal of Cartwheel's programmes. As such, activities to deepen their appreciation for their own indigenous culture are integrated into the curriculum. In Sinakungan, a two-hour cultural learning session is conducted every Friday, in which elders in the community would share the Higaonon beliefs and lifeways (i.e. practices, rituals, songs and dances) to the children.

#### **Increased learning resources**

In addition, the school library's collection of story books and references is

continually increasing through donations from generous donors. The presence of a library in such a remote location is a helpful resource for students to access learning materials and practice their reading skills.

### **Empowered Community**

The Higaonon tribe is nomadic by nature to primarily address their need to provide food for themselves and their families. Through the years, Cartwheel has been present in Sinakungan through observing their culture, directly affecting their educational programme with the fluctuating numbers in attendance of the learners. Progressive change has recently been observed in the community's desire and corresponding actions to have a more permanent residence within Sinakungan. Back in 2012, houses were still made of very light materials; as of the writing of this report in 2014, their homes are now more carefully constructed using the finest wood found from their ancestral forest. This shows the intention to permanently stay in the community as initiated and influenced by the school and the leadership of the para-teachers.

Even though Cartwheel's expertise is education, it encourages the community members to keep on producing their own handicrafts as additional livelihood. They have recently produced good quality products such as plates, fruit bowls, roasted pig trays, baskets, and boxes made from local materials rattan and "nito," both abundant resources found in Sinakungan. Cartwheel has already bought the initial craft samples and is currently marketing them within its own network.

### **Created community youth organization**

The youth in the community had formed an organization that would help out and provide assistance to the school, as well as to the community. The ECEE programme has also sparked the interest of the youth to take action and be involved.

### **Intensified supplemental feeding**

Lastly, the supplemental feeding sessions built into Cartwheel's education programmes have helped address hunger among children. Good health and nutrition are significant factors affecting the performance of the learners. The assurance of daily meals serves as an incentive for children to come to school despite its considerable distance from their homes, thereby decreasing the incidence of chronic absences from class.

### 3.3 Implications and Suggestions

To implement a similar programme, it would be best to keep in mind that IP education is unique in that it entails different approaches. One must understand that as varied as it is among individuals, indigenous peoples also have their own distinct ways of learning. The programme should be implemented in the context of IP cultures, customs and beliefs. It should take into consideration their special needs, histories, and value systems of the community. To effectively teach IP learners, it is crucial that the world is perceived through their eyes. Only when relations are drawn between new information presented and their known lifeways can learning be taken in as relevant, and assured of lifelong value. Even as good changes through education are intended for their community, all processes have to be undertaken constantly with respect to their identity as indigenous peoples.

Openness is key in nurturing a dynamic programme where teachers and students learn from each other. If programme implementers are non-indigenous, they must be willing to immerse themselves in the community they seek to serve for a significant period of time. It is being in sincere solidarity with the community that understanding and trust are fostered, making way for a safe learning environment. Respect for the dignity of each community member is manifested in respect for their entire culture as well; educational programmes result in favourable outcomes when it is never forced, but rather merely facilitated. All key players should recognize the abundance of both human and natural resources in the community and education should empower them.

## 4. Annex

### Graphic representations of processes



**Figure 1. Curriculum development process for the learners of the ECEE programme**

Cartwheel Foundation's entry point in the community always starts with a community meeting. It is a dialogue between the community members and Cartwheel representatives. During this dialogue, Cartwheel tries to observe and listen to the concerns and issues in the community. After that, a 4C's Workshop is scheduled. This is a workshop that tries to map out the community's Culture and Tradition, Current Realities, Competencies, and Community Vision.

To start the process of Curriculum Development and Indigenization, Cartwheel conducts a culture and values profiling workshop. A tool developed by Cartwheel is used during the workshop. This tool is a comprehensive cultural mapping instrument that covers the following: leadership, livelihood, resource management, education, health, rituals, women’s roles, and basic services. Thereafter, the results of the values and culture profiling are returned to the communities and are validated. Validation is done through a focused group discussion.

After the results are validated, a Curriculum Framework Setting Workshop is conducted to develop the curriculum framework. The workshop is done with the help of Cartwheel alumni grantees who are also knowledgeable about indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices.

The Indigenized Curriculum is the product of the processes that Cartwheel has been through together with the partner communities, elders, learners, Cartwheel grantees, and para-teachers. It follows the Department of Education’s competencies and integrates the culture and values of the indigenous peoples.



**Figure 2. Curriculum framework for the learners of the ECEE Programme**

The curriculum framework is the product of the validated results of the culture and values profiling workshop. It is the foundation of the Indigenized Curriculum developed specifically for the Higaonon children.

The curriculum framework has the ancestral domain as the center of indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices. The indigenous peoples' lives are rooted to their land. Thus, the indigenous world views and beliefs, value systems, culture, arts and traditions, history, people and structures, realities and challenges, livelihood, and aspirations are connected with one another through the ancestral domain as the heart of indigenous peoples' lives and learning.



**Figure 3. Lesson planning process for the learners of the ECEE Programme**

### Sample Lesson Plan

#### First Day

Theme: My Self and My Tribe-Most Valued Higaonon Indigenous Materials

#### CIRCLE TIME:

- A. Higaonon way of praying
  - a. Children will gather together in a circle  
(The shape reminds them of their culture, how they ought to be disposed in times of prayer, rituals, and gatherings)
  - b. The invited elder will give instructions to the children
  - c. He will perform “Dulis of Luy-a” involving slightly brushing ginger onto children’s nails and foreheads (a sign for safety, peace and to be far from any bad luck )
- B. Group Sharing
  - a. Provide a box of smiley pictures and pass the box around
  - b. Each one will pick an image of smiley from the box and tell why he/she has chosen to pick that image



## SCIENCE:

### Objectives

- A. Identify the uses of an indigenous materials called, “giman”
- B. Name the different parts of the giman
- C. Appreciate the importance of that specific indigenous material for their tribe

Subject Matter: giman (used to trap a rat, deer, or wild boar)

Materials: Rattan sticks (long and short, thick and thin)

### Procedure:

- A. Preparation
  - a. The teacher will introduce the elder to the children
  - b. Discussion:
    - i. The elder will show the giman and engage the children with questions and have them answer:
      1. Have you seen this kind of material before?
      2. Who among you have tried using this?
      3. Do your fathers have this?
    - ii. Show and discuss with the children the giman’s parts, uses and how it is important to their tribe
      1. Explain the story: why it is important to the tribe
      2. What are their beliefs and what happens before and after using it
      3. What are the techniques in using the material

## LANGUAGE:

### Objectives

- A. To recognize letters of a specific word
- B. To read the specific name of the indigenous material
- C. To hear the sound of letters
- D. To recognize the sound of letters

Subject Matter: GIMAN (G, I, M, A, N)

Materials: Actual object of giman, sticks or twigs, stones, sand or soil box

### Procedure:

- A. Unlocking of difficulties
  - a. Show the different letters: G I M A N
  - b. Prepare letters made of sticks joined together with rubber band or abaca



c. Review using flashcards



d. Ask the learners to practice writing the given letters on the soil box



e. If the word GIMAN is already formed

i. Follow as the teacher says the sounds/letter name

1. Giman

Let them practice pronouncing the following letters:

2. G -- /g/

3. I -- /i/

4. M -- /m/

5. A -- /a/

6. N -- /n/

ii. Question and Answer

1. Ask the children if what word they formed

2. Are they interested to listen to a story?

B. Story telling:

a. Have the learners form a semi-circle with teacher in front

b. Instruct the learners to listen to the following story:

One day Balaugto (the father) with his son Ilay were planning to have good meal for dinner, so they made a trap to catch some meat. Balaugto roamed around to get a rattan branch and some sticks. Together, father and son made a trap. Ilay was wondering why his father was not talking to him while making the trap, so he just also kept quiet while watching his father. Soon after, Balaugto talked when he finished the major part

of the giman. He told his son that it is their tribe's practice that in making any kind of object, once you are not yet done, one must keep quiet and just focus. They believe that if they are communicating with others while creating objects, they could not come up with something good. From then on, Ilay learned and always concentrated fully whenever he created something from the materials around him.

- c. Question and answer
  - 1. Who are the characters of the story?
  - 2. Where does the story happen?
  - 3. What do they do?
  - 4. Why do they make a trap?

## ARTS

Objectives:

- A. To observe how to make giman
- B. To draw/make a mini-giman on their own
- C. Learn the process of making a giman

Subject Matter: My Giman

Materials: Abaca, rattan, sticks

Procedure:

- A. Making a giman
  - a. Show the children the materials used for giman
  - b. The invited elder will demonstrate how to make a giman
  - c. Demonstrate how to use the giman
    - i. Let the children experience how to use the giman

## MATHEMATICS

Objectives:

- A. To identify numbers through objects
- B. To recognize objects
- C. To distinguish between more and less

Subject Matter: Identifying numbers of objects

Materials: Sticks, stones, leaves, giman

Procedure

- A. Motivation: Singing
  - a. Invite everyone to sing an indigenous song that talks about numbers
 

<a href="#"><u>Sampulo ha Bakbak</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Ten frogs</u></a>
Sampulo ha bak-bak	Ten frogs

Tag langoy langoy	swam and swam
Pataas daw pakababa	up and down
Patuyok tuyok	round and round
Kagi ki inay	said the mother,
Tumiduga kaw un kun	“Go to sleep now”
Sa tubag ki bata	The child's reply,
Kabayabaya	“I want to, I want to”

B. Drill:

- Show different real objects
- Let children recognize and identify the numbers of objects shown

Example:

- How many sticks of rattan are there?



- How many leaves are there?








C. Matching Activity

- Match column A to column B
- Let the children identify the numbers of objects in column A
- Ask children to review figures of counting

Example:

PPP = 3 (How many letter P's are in the box?)

A	B
1. 	5
2. 	4
3. 	8
4. 	1
5. 	2



▲ *Higaonon school children of school year 2013-2014 pose for a group photo with their four teachers standing behind.*

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## field visit

On behalf of APCEIU, Ms. Yeonwoo Lee, Assistant Programme Specialist of Education and Training Team, and Ms. Wonjin Lim, Assistant Programme Specialist of Publication and Public Relations Team, undertook a field visit to the Cartwheel Foundation in Manila, Philippines on 1 December 2014 to carry out the following missions: 1) to confer the EIU Best Practices Award, 2) to conduct in-depth interview about the best practice case, and 3) to provide consultation and comments on the final draft of the case.



▲ Interview and consultation on the best practice case



▲ *Conferring of the EIU Best Practices Award  
(from L-R: Cartwheel Team members Berose Tacal, Pia Ortiz-Luis,  
Bricks Sintaon and APCEIU delegates Yeonwoo Lee, Wonjin Lim)*