

Basic health skills training for community health workers and p.o. leaders

In the face of a disorganized Philippine health care system that is urban-centered and focused in tertiary care, the practice of community-managed health programs made significant contributions not only in terms of improving the community's health but in awakening and mobilizing the people to deal with the root causes of poverty-related sickness.

VPHCSI as an institution advocates community-based health programs (CBHP) and considered community health workers (CHWs) as its backbone. VPHCSI equips CHWs and leaders of partner people's organizations (POs) with knowledge and skills to respond to the basic health needs of their communities through health promotion, disease prevention and selective curative process.

Basic Health Skills Training for CHWs and PO leaders is an extended part of the project Complete Physical Examination in Early School Years as an Effective Tool in Delivering Preventive Interventions to Children funded by Task Force Carabao-Germany. Topics of the training included basic health orientation, CBHP orientation, concepts of health and disease, vital signs taking like blood pressure, temperature, pulse rate, heart rate and respiratory rate, home remedies, common diseases like acute respiratory infections and acute gastroenteritis or diarrhea, and ventusa. Growing of herbal gardens and herbal medicines processing such as lagundi syrup and salabat as expectorant and bronchodilators, ointment for skin itchiness and liniment for arthritis which are made of common herbal plants were being taught also. Lastly, the use of common and essential Western drugs to treat common complaints was being discussed too. These included paracetamol for fever, headache and simple pains, ferrous sulfate for iron-deficiency, amoxicillin for ordinary infections, antacids for hyperacidity, mefenamic acid for muscle pains and oresol for acute gastroenteritis with mild dehydration.

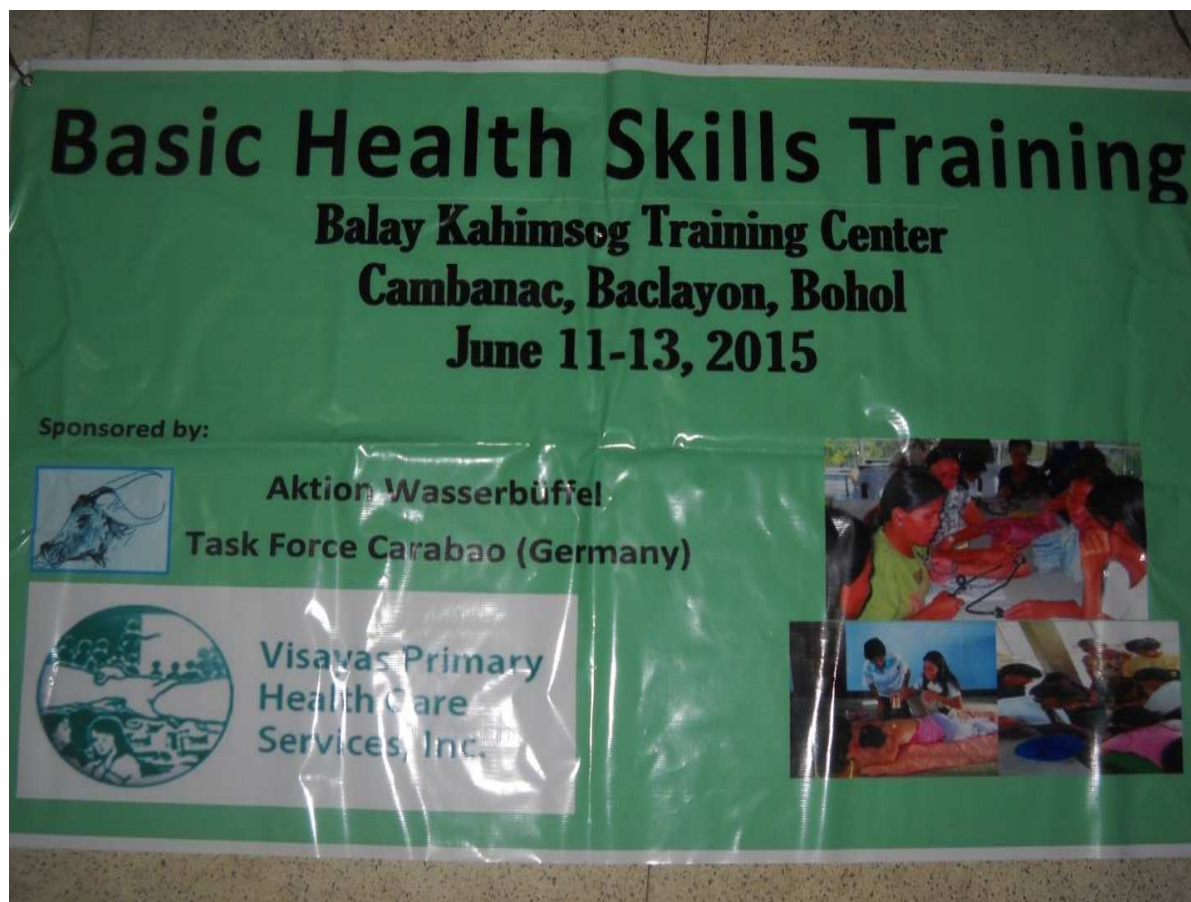
Set of medical equipments like blood pressure apparatus, weighing scale, thermometers, first aid kit with first line drugs were provided to the health committees with proper instructions given to the community health workers being in charged.

The training was conducted last June 11-13 in Balay Kahimsog Training Center in Barangay Cambanac, Baclayon, Bohol. There were 15 participants only coming from project areas in Trinidad, Bien Unido, Ubay and Danao. Participants from Loon and Maribojoc were not able to attend because of fear to be reported by the pro team and barangay intelligence to the military and the provincial government. These two

areas been militarized since February and most of our p.o. leaders been interrogated and harassed.

As developmental workers, we experienced harassments as we lead a continuing campaign to uphold the people's right to health and risked our lives to serve the poor and marginalized communities deprived of public health services.

Our greatest reward has always been seeing the transformation of barely-literate farmers used to silently enduring poverty and exploitation into empowered leaders and members of their peoples' organizations and Health Committees. Our goal is to establish community-managed health programs in organized communities so that their health problems are addressed and their health status is improved. We bear witness that it is possible to place "health in the hands of the people" through community-based health programs. We hope to see the day when no CHW or health professional will never have to think twice in serving far-flung communities just because they fear for their life and safety.





VPHCSI staff and participants took picture after the basic health skills training conducted for community health workers and people's organization leaders.



Participants diligently listened and actively participated in the discussion of primary health issues affecting their communities.



Proper demonstrations on vital signs taking particularly blood pressure by VPHCSI staff were done followed by practical application of the participants.



Ventusa also known as cupping is a traditional way of treating pain, gastrointestinal disorders and lung diseases like chronic cough and asthma.



Making of herbal medicines like lagundi syrup and salabat which act as expectorants and bronchodilators were primarily taught since acute respiratory infections are common in the communities.



Other herbal medicines taught included ointment for skin itchiness and liniment for arthritis which are made of common herbal plants.



Basic health apparatus as well as first aid medicines were given to each people's organizations health committee through its community health workers.



Community health workers believe that perseverance, sense of duty, compassion, humility and honesty are the most important work attitudes in serving the community.