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F R I E N D S



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN with Sitio Domolpos, Tinongdan, Itogon Benguet

BENGUET COFFEE PROJECT:

**An Intercultural Dialogue with the IWAK Tribe Indigenous People +
Coffee + Agritourism + Social Enterprise + Community Development Project for the Sitio
Domolpos, Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet**

Introduction

The community of Domolpos is one of the Sitios in Barangay Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet (see attachment A for more information). Domolpos has spectacular scenery, and heirloom coffee trees found just at the foot of Mt. Ugo are believed to be centuries old. Mt. Ugo is a popular hiking trail in the Cordilleras. Mountain climbers are in awe of the beauty that this trail offers. Traverses include stopping by Sitio Domolpos before reaching the Mt. Ugo summit. Aside from such natural wonders, the hospitality of the whole community is likewise remarkable. Based on these assessments, the Lousian extensionists proposed interventions along Agri-Tourism and Coffee for sustainable livelihood of heirloom coffee and cultural preservation of Domolpos (see attachment B for the activity plan and timeline).

However, the motivation for extending support was triggered by an approach to a Louisian faculty (Maria Araceli Tambol of SAMCIS-HTM) by Kape Ti Uma owners. Kape Ti Uma is a social enterprise, which has been directly sourcing and promoting single-origin coffee from the IWAK Tribe in Domolpos in Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet, to come up with coffee tourism research to sustain the livelihood and preserve the culture of the Domolpos community. Kape ti Uma has been helping coffee farmers as part of its corporate social responsibility for almost six (6) years. In effect, SLU embarked on research to explore the viability of the request. The timing of the request coincided with a research promotership course offered by SLU that was in full swing during the 1st semester of AY 21-22. Maria Araceli Tambol steered her undergraduate students to study the possibility of a coffee cum agri-tourism project at Sitio Domolpos. This endeavor was also supported by a Reverse Pitching activity under the DOST IMPACT FIGHTT funded project implemented by the University Research & Innovation Center whose Director is the coordinator of the Erasmus+ FRIENDS project.

A. ON AGRI-TOURISM

It is believed that while coffee is grown in more than 60 countries worldwide, few of these destinations have fully capitalized on the various opportunities' coffee production has

provided for tourism demand to date. Hawai'i was perhaps considered to be the first destination believed to have utilized coffee growing and processing areas as tourist destinations, as since the 1980s, Kona coffee processing plants had transformed their operations into visitor attractions, and coffee tours were offered to many of the island's tourists. Even Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, which have rich coffee histories and cultures, offer tourism activities such as selecting coffee beans, roasting, and tasting.

Thus, the idea of coffee tourism is not far-fetched, considering that Sitio Domolpos can capitalize on its cultural heritage and its heirloom centuries-old coffee trees and its strategic location for mountain climbers en route to the summit of Mt. Ugo. Coffee Tourism can be an alternative source of income for coffee farmers in Domolpos, Benguet. The main objective is to investigate the need to combine culture, coffee and tourism so that Coffee Tourism becomes a niche market segment for sustainable livelihood of heirloom coffee and cultural preservation. The unique selling proposition of the place is also capitalizing on the cultural heritage being identified as an indigenous people.

In October 2021, while the researchers gathered information, they chanced upon different farms around Benguet already offering coffee tourism. Farm to Cup Philippines, a coffee company, offers mini-coffee tours in Benguet and the Farm to Cup (F2C) program, a holistic program covering the whole stretch of the coffee industry from coffee nursery operations to cafe operations and coffee tourism and entrepreneurship. Mudaan ni Pamilja is yet another farm in Shilan that offers such tours in collaboration with a coffee company in Manila. Admirals Farm Park is next on the list to provide these coffee tours, which include coffee farm appreciation tours for children. Lay-odan Farms is the latest to follow suit in promoting the farm-to-cup concept, especially for the youth.

The researchers likewise chanced upon many articles on partnering with farmers by Cordillera Green Network (CGN). All these initial findings led the researchers to continue to pursue the potential for Coffee Tourism with cultural heritage promotions in Sitio Domolpos, Brgy Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet.

Subsequently, researchers went to Domolpos on April 11, 2022, for an ocular inspection of the area and to talk with the residents. It was found that the elders and the coffee farmers were interested to know about Coffee and Agri-tourism and the benefits that they can get from the proposals.

Component 1: Development of a Domolpos Coffee Tourism concept.

To come up with a Coffee Tourism Development Plan, including an economic feasibility assessment or business plan for the Domolpos Community, several multi-stakeholder cooperation meetings are planned for the project with the presence of the involved stakeholders - IWAK Tribe, Domolpos LGUs, SAMCIS, UnRIC, DA RDO, Kape Ti Uma, Wyldwood Coffee, Farm-to-Cup.

A planned Coffee Forum Series kicked off with Part 1 on June 16, 2022 at SLU's Gevers Hall. The activity was about sharing best practices of coffee farm owners. This event was borne out of a research recommendation for coffee farms into Coffee Tourism to share their best practices for information and knowledge sharing. This first Coffee Tourism Forum was participated in by four farms, namely Farm to Cup, Mudaan ni Pamilja, Admirals Farm

Park, and Cordillera Green Network. Other LGUs such as DTI, DA RDO, and DOST were likewise present as other diverse stakeholders. Another training activity followed suit on August 15. UnRIC has organized a capacitation and knowledge transfer session with specialists from Belgium who lectured on best practices for Sensory Analysis, which provided a basis for a coffee cupping and comparative evaluation of Domolpos coffee with other Benguet coffee.

Then a high-level planning workshop on August 16, 2022 transpired. In attendance were IWAK Tribe, Domolpos LGUs, SAMCIS, UnRIC, DA RDO, Kape Ti Uma, and Wyldwood Coffee. The output of this workshop is found in attachment C.

Afterward, a significant meeting with Wyldwood Coffee Project followed suit on September 16, 2022 (see attachment D for the minutes).

More series of lectures and knowledge-sharing forums will be set up to keep stakeholders engaged and updated about current issues and developments in the coffee industry.

Coffee tourism promotions' dissemination and exploitation.

An integral part of any Agritourism project is properly promoting and advertising the experience to the public and potential clients. As with any tourist attraction or tourist site, this requires a highly appealing web presence and a clear outline of costs and services. Even though the main attraction focuses on coffee farms in Domolpos as the target for the coffee tourism concept, all component packages eventually aim to promote and support coffee tourism in Benguet. Especially, agritourism experiences are uniquely suited for mixing and matching by the clients. Farms that offer coffee tours are not necessarily competitors, but they can focus on different target customer groups, differentiate themselves based on their unique local natural environment, or offer additional activities. For example, Domolpos is uniquely suited to combine the cultural heritage promotions of the Indigenous People of Sitio Domolpos with a coffee tour with a hike up Mt. Ugo. Other existing coffee tours provide services tailored to children or foreign tourists.

The diversity of locations and services strengthens coffee tourism as an experience as a whole. Currently, there is no updated source for existing coffee tours in Benguet that an interested client may be able to access. This shall be a significant endeavor of the project implementers to allow the team to learn more about existing tours. These sites show potential for future tours and areas that require future support or rehabilitation to sustain or even increase the yield of coffee in the region.

Main Outcomes

The main objective of the Coffee Tourism project is to create a Community Development Plan tailored to the situation of the Domolpos Coffee Framers. The meeting and planning workshops with primary stakeholders, such as the IWAK Tribe and Kape Ti Uma are crucial for the successful delivery of the plan, as these meetings allow the extension team to triangulate collected information on the current situation of Domolpos Community. To ensure this impact is achieved, all concerned groups will lay down detailed planning for Coffee Tourism in Domolpos. This requires the IWAK Tribe to be part of the contextualization to maximize its benefit for its community. The Coffee Forum, communication plan, and activities

such as the cupping and comparative evaluation of Domolpos Coffee with other Benguet coffee varieties are supporting outputs that help raise awareness for coffee tourism in general and Domolpos coffee products in particular.

At least one or more organized sessions as part of the Coffee Forum, as well as more formal trips to Domolpos, will be conducted, e.g., for the presentation of the Development plan to the rest of the community. A scheduled visit was held on October 15, 2022, which perfectly coincided with the world's celebration of the Indigenous People's Month. A communication plan will guide the team towards creating regular public updates on the SLU Facebook page, website, and other media outlets so regular promotional materials and announcements can be disseminated to the public and stakeholders of the project.

- a. **Coffee Tourism Development Plan**, includes an economic feasibility assessment or business plan.
- b. **Stakeholder engagement meetings:** Meetings and workshops with the IWAK TRIBE, SAMCIS HTM, UnRIC, KAPE TI UMA, DA RDO, Wyldwood Coffee Project, Farm2Cup for planning, project progression and project outcomes, as well as the continuation of the Coffee Forum Series.
- c. **Public communication plan for Coffee Tourism in Benguet.** Communication plan updating stakeholders and the public on the purpose and content of coffee tours.

Sustainability

The main goal of this extension project is to develop a Coffee Tourism Development Plan, including an economic feasibility assessment or business plan for the coffee farming community in Domolpos, Itogon, Benguet. Even though coffee is a widely consumed and highly demanded product, coffee farmers rarely benefit economically, as they only supply the raw materials that are processed into higher-value products by other entities. These sellers and distributors are interested in keeping raw materials' costs low. In addition, the amount of locally grown coffee beans is too small to benefit from economies of scale, making local coffee more expensive than imported varieties. This situation makes it very hard for coffee farmers to grow their savings and improve their livelihoods from one generation to the next. One suggested solution, especially for small farming communities, is to diversify their service offerings so income is not limited to the sales of coffee beans.

Agricultural tourism is one of those potential avenues for generating income that has also been identified by local government units and is receiving increasing attention as a regional strategic focus topic. Agricultural tourism brings consumers closer to the origins of the products they buy, leading to a greater appreciation of the product itself. Still, it also draws attention to the labor intensity of agriculture and farming. Consumers understand that a slightly higher price for locally produced products benefits these farmers directly. In addition, agricultural tourism also incorporates a region's natural heritage, promoting better care and protection of native plant and animal species by the locals. They now have an added incentive to keep their environment clean and healthy. As a third aspect, visitors share in the local culture and traditions, which promotes the continuation of said traditions and increases the level of education, appreciation, and protection for local customs.

Setting up such a multi-faceted coffee tourism concept requires close collaboration with the local community, as well as a solid business plan that is feasible and sustainable.

This extension proposal can only cover the initial exploratory phase, where facts and data regarding the location and condition of the farms, the skills and resources of the farmers, the natural sites surrounding the farms, and the cultural context can be assessed, documented, and evaluated. From there, the team can create a first draft tour plan and business plan that serves as a starting point for implementing this new service. In the phases following this proposal, the SLU team must still offer continuing support to the community.

The business plan will need to be adapted to the market demand, and the community needs to be capacitated in marketing and improving their tours. Below is an example of the different parts that need to be detailed to develop a coffee tourism concept for Domolpos. These are examples of other existing tours in Benguet.

B. ON COFFEE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

In October 2021, researchers met Mr. Ben Ngo-ay, a coffee farmer who owns about 700 coffee trees in Baguio. He shared that he was struggling to sell about 1000 pieces of his coffee seedlings since there was no longer any space for him to plant his coffee. This led to a collaboration with the SLU Parish Office, which made an initial move to help Mr. Ngo-ay. A mini-tour in his coffee farm paved the way for teaching the couples how to plant coffee, buy his coffee seedlings and, as a result, distribute them as wedding tokens during SLU'S yearly mass wedding as part of the University's social involvement advocacy.

As another story unfolds, during the initial meeting for the Reverse Pitching Challenge, the coffee businesses, particularly the owner of The Fix: Authentic Premium Cordillera Coffee and the owner of The Red Soil, said that many coffee growers from Benguet Region fear that imported coffee blends are sold at lower prices which may lead end consumers to steer away from locally produced coffee products. Thus, these owners called for the promotion of local single-origin coffee. Furthermore, they call for a sense of identity specifically for Benguet Coffee since most coffee sold in the market is misbranded or mislabeled. Thus, farmers' anonymity and coffee beans' anonymity lead to poor-quality coffee. In the end, the coffee farmers remain poor while the middlemen and other coffee businesses continue to become rich.

Confounding the problem is the decline in coffee production and hectarage. Arabica coffee, in particular, is harvested only once a year and is not enough to sustain coffee farmers' basic needs. Thus, farmers switch to other forms of livelihood (Philippine Coffee Industry Road Map 2017-2022). The decrease in coffee production was further confirmed by one of the participants (Wyldwood Coffee Project) during the Coffee Tourism Forum held on June 16, 2022. These owners called for a sense of urgency to start planting coffee and noted that coffee in Benguet is no longer enough for the people of Benguet itself. However, recently, the San Pablo Seminary has been promoting its Muyungan Heritage, a community garden that is opening its space for planting coffee. San Pablo is willing to partner with SLU for this Benguet Coffee project endeavor.

In light of the above, the following are the work packages that are planned to address coffee production and marketing concerns:

Component 2: Coffee site mapping and profiling for selected locations in Brgy. Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet.

Identification of Coffee planting sites in collaboration with the cooperating agencies to create a local coffee map for Barangay Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet. The mapping activity will profile each location to record and document data such as elevation, sunlight hours, coffee variety, number of trees, average yield, basic flavor pattern, and more. These initial data sets will help create sustainability and special care measures for the different coffee varieties and coffee farms in and around the identified area. Aside from sustainability and special care for coffee plantations, coming up with a specific identity for each coffee variety is also a concern. The Innovation and Technology Transfer Unit of UnRIC will support this endeavor by assessing the possibility of applying for a geographical indication / a collective regional mark protecting local products under IPOPIL and supporting the application process if possible.

Tree planting activity

During the research, it has been found that Benguet's total coffee yield cannot satisfy producers' demand for local single-origin beans. In addition, deforestation and neglect of existing heirloom coffee trees not only further diminish the potential harvest but also causes damage to the natural beauty and biodiversity of the region. This poses a threat to any agritourism initiative, as the value proposition to potential clients includes the experience of both the local cultural and natural heritage. Hence, the most suitable plan is to go for massive tree-planting activities. Currently, the mountains at Domolpos are in desperate need of rehabilitation in preparation for implementing the Coffee planting to favor the development of an agri-tourism project.

Data gathering on coffee sites (mainly farms and plantations) should also be underway while tree planting is ongoing. In the short-term, tree planting helps secure and protect fertile topsoil from erosion, and in the long term, planting new coffee trees is the only way to increase the amount of locally grown and produced coffee beans and coffee products.

Sustainability

Beyond Brgy. Tinongdan, the long-term plan is to cover the whole area of Benguet to become the Coffee capital of the Philippines which will likewise impact agri-tourism. Brgy Tinongdan will serve as the baseline/ role model of reference for the rest of the barangays or areas in Benguet. Domolpos, in particular, will serve as the foundation for identifying other sites where the concept could be replicated and further improved.

PROFILE OF THE TARGET COMMUNITY (BRGY. TINONGDAN)

Domolpos, Tinongdan, Itogon Benguet, thru the IWAK Tribe Indigenous Coffee Farmers Association Incorporated, shall be the main target of the proposed interventions. Domolpos is one of the areas of Purok 4 of Barangay Tinongdan. Domolpos has a small population of about 400 to 450, per input from the farmers who were interviewed when they dropped by SLU in August 2022.

In the not-so-distant future, this community development project will expand to widen the coverage to the whole of Tinongdan, Itogon, and eventually to the full range of Benguet. Tinongdan is the second biggest barangay of the municipality of Itogon in the province of Benguet in the Cordillera Administrative Region. Out of the nine barangays of Itogon, Tinongdan is one of the non-mining barangays. Instead, they emphasize the preservation and practice of culture and traditions. The spectacular sceneries in the entire barangay are considered a prime tourist destination in the municipality, wherefore they are known as the “Seat of Cultural Heritage and Natural Wonders.”

Because the Tinongdan area is quite large, the engagement has to kickstart with the community of Domolpos of Tinongdan, Itogon Benguet considering their strategic characteristics of possessing centuries-old coffee trees and being located at the foot of Mt. Ugo, which bode well for a coffee and agri-tourism entrepreneurial venture promising combination.

See attachment A for the profile of Brgy Tinongdan, Itogon, Benguet

Project Implementers & Cooperating Agencies.

This project is multifaceted with multi-stakeholder engagement. The Lousian community shall spearhead the implementation with the support of external government agencies, private entities, farm entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, and others interested in leveraging Benguet as a Coffee Tourism Capital of the Philippines for the world to know. In SLU, a university-wide collaboration of the School of Accountancy, Management, Computing, and Information Studies, University Research and Innovation Center (UnRIC), the School of Engineering and Architecture, School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts (STELA), in particular its NSTP department, and the School of Natural Sciences (SNS).

Special mention is the role played by the Erasmus+ FRIENDS project to ensure that the indigenous community of Sitio Domolpos will preserve its cultural heritage by engaging in cultural dialogue, which must be translated into knowledge as the continuity of culture rests on the transmission of knowledge. This intercultural dialogue aims to profile the area along demographic, socio-cultural characteristics, problems, development needs, and aspirations of this Indigenous people. The enactment into law of RA No. 8371 (An Act to Recognize, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds There For, and for Other Purposes) shall ensure that right of the indigenous people and protected and their cultural practices are preserved and maintained in the light of the development of the times. As an academic institution of higher learning, SLU must advocate for the indigenous community's protection in keeping with the UN's SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities and SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities to build.

As to the external partners, the Department of Agriculture, Regional Field Office (DA-RFO), Kape Ti Uma, Wyldwood Coffee Project, Farm to Cup, Mudaan ni Pamilja, Admirals Farm Park, Cordillera Green Network (CGN), the Department of Tourism (DOT) to name a few are expected to be significant partners in this pursuit to build a resilient Indigenous

people's community in Sitio Domolpos and after that Brgy Tinongdan and propagate towards the inclusion of the entire Benguet region.

The multifaceted nature of this project, along with socio-economic, political, cultural, and even environmental, requires the collaboration of several academic specialties. This extension proposal relies on the cooperation, skills, and expertise of all concerned. SLU's SAMCIS shall come in with its leadership and business sense; SEA will lend their professional assessment on technical and financial aspects regarding required machinery in the coffee production process, such as roasters and grinders. NSTP will support the data gathering, mapping, and profiling existing coffee plantations in Benguet. At a later time, SNS will assess and recommend the best procedures to ensure the longevity and health of heirloom coffee trees. This extension project was set up as a response to the needs of the Domolpos Coffee farming community, as well as a current political trend to support the setup of Agritourism initiatives to strengthen local farming communities, such as the local coffee industry. As Agritourism will likely become a government priority area in the short term, research and extension programs such as this are avenues to potential government grant applications.

Attached B is the time table and activities to be done on this project.