

Donation Recon Trip to Baler Bacong Elementary Schools January 21st, 2017



After a rough and tumble ride over the high mountains separating the Central Luzon Plain and the craggy coast of Aurora province, we arrived at the incredibly picturesque Juan C. Angara airport, just inland from Baler, adjacent to Barangay Bacong, our ultimate destination.



The weather was beautiful, the air fresh and clean coming off the Pacific, with a perfect winter-time temperature of around 25C / 77F. The feeling was like Jamaica, with the gauntlet of tall coconut trees.



Bacong Elementary School is just around the corner from the airport. A small gaggle of students were on hand, allegedly getting in some extra mathematics studies on a Saturday, but acting more like they were whooping it up on recess ☺



According to the tablet, there are a lot of DepEd folks involved with this school, but the condition of its grounds and 4 small classrooms indicated they hadn't spent much time there. Five Ph.D's listed, but the roofs leak, toilets are broken and the back areas are flooded / full of mosquitoes.



The teachers do what they can to pretty up the place with local botany, including snake plant (some of the largest I have ever seen), flowering aromatics, and (cleverly) Citronella all around the classrooms to deter the mosquitoes.



Mrs. Carmela Nobicio, a 35-year veteran teacher at this one school, is in charge of grades 2 and 3. She greeted and took us for a tour of her tiny, yet proud little institution of basic learning.



The bench-style desks and seating, produced and maintained locally by volunteers, are all that could be furnished for this poor little school. Unsurprisingly, No A/C during the hot months.



The area behind Bacong Elementary is a marshland sitting under about 6 inches of black water, churned up by a few happy water buffalo. The wet environment insures mold infests the back walls, contributing to respiratory illnesses in both teachers and children...



... as best illustrated in this picture....



Just a short 10 minute trike ride from the school is the bustling, touristy, and surprisingly clean surfing town of Baler, complete with an impressive, typhoon-resistant, concrete boardwalk/seawall along which resort hotels, bars and restaurants are situated.



After visiting the school, my Chief Mechanic and I decided to check out the beach area and invite our trike driver to enjoy a cool iced tea with us. The place reminded me of Martinique, or other, similar mountainous Caribbean islands. Hats off to the local government for having one of the tidiest urban areas I have ever observed in the Philippines.

The Bacong Elementary School Donation is tentatively planned for February 25th, 2017