

May 2010 E-Newsletter

IIRR 50th Anniversary Launched in the Philippines

(SILANG, Cavite, Philippines) – IIRR friends, family and staff gathered on April 30, 2010 to launch the Institute’s 50th anniversary celebration festivities for the year. The kick-off event was a tribute to the founder of IIRR, Dr. Y.C. James Yen, and to those who have devoted their lives to advancing the vision and mission of the rural reconstruction movement.

Dr. Julian Gonsalves, Senior Program Advisor of IIRR, presented the welcome address wherein he recalled the work of Dr. Yen and how he touched the lives of the rural communities. Marissa Espineli, IIRR’s Manager of Education and Training, presented “Pagbabalik Tanaw” (Looking Back), a reflection of 50 years of IIRR’s work. She shared key accomplishments of IIRR and emphasized each decade’s distinct character.



Attendees of the 50th Anniversary Launch in Silang walk to the Yen Memorial to pay tribute to Dr. Y.C. James Yen.

[Click here to see more photos and to read the full article.](#)

Building Capacity of CORDAID’s India Partners on CMDRR

(GUJARAT, India) – IIRR conducted training on Facilitating Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction for CORDAID’s partners in India from April 5-16, 2010. The training was hosted by UNNATI, a CORDAID partner, in Gujarat, India. Twenty-six participants representing nine partner organizations attended the course. The course started with



establishing a common understanding of the philosophy, principles and practices/processes of the community-managed disaster risk reduction working framework. It also covered the process of how to facilitate the community towards taking charge of their own community risk reduction process. Understanding the risks a community faces and learning how to assess their vulnerability and capacity to address these risks, the participants developed the confidence how to integrate disaster risk reduction at the organization and community levels through community-owned action plans.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Remarks by Florence Davis, President of The Starr Foundation, at IIRR's 50th Anniversary Celebration in New York

(NEW YORK, New York, USA) – *Below are the remarks of Florence Davis, President of The Starr Foundation, following her acceptance of the 2010 Y.C. James Yen Citizen of the World Award on behalf of [The Starr Foundation](#) at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of IIRR on April 13, 2010. [Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP](#) was also honored as a 2010 Y.C. James Yen Citizen of the World.*



Florence Davis, President of The Starr Foundation

Citizen of the World sounds quite grand.

But my most enduring memories of IIRR will be from a small corner of the world in the rural Philippines, where a number of us travelled to see the fruits of four years of hard work on the remote island of Ticao.

The program costs there have not been high; in fact, it is remarkable what little money was involved compared to most of Starr's grants. The amount of patient labor and time involved, however, was noteworthy. It takes a while to gain a community's trust, to get neighbors talking to one another, to let the community decide that they need to move out of poverty and to let the community determine the solutions they want to pursue.

This is not top-down work with handouts from 40,000 feet. It is painstaking, bottom-up work in which the community, to paraphrase the poet Machado, makes its own road by walking.

But the work on Ticao paid off. We saw bio-intensive gardens at schools where the children learn to build raised beds and to use compost—skills they take home to their parents. We sloshed out to a tilapia farm in the middle of a rainstorm, to see the fish fed with termite larvae from nearby tree stumps. We learned about a toddler supplemental food call Insumix, prepared using indigenous ingredients such as mung beans and tiny dried fish ground by hand and mixed with cooking oil and sugar, to halt malnutrition in children weaned too young.

The women in the community in particular, most without much in the way of formal education, took their role in the community development efforts seriously and came into town to make formal presentations to us, in their best clothes and their carefully practiced English.

We even had a basic IIRR tenet drilled home to us. The women wanted to replicate the Insumix project in neighboring village, but they needed to raise \$44 for two hand-cranked food mills. Tony [Gooch (former Chair of IIRR)] and I told the IIRR staff that we would donate the money. The staff turned us down, saying that it was important for the community itself to learn to find the money for its projects, perhaps from the government or from local entrepreneurship.

We finally convinced them that coming to the center of town to make a presentation to us was in the nature of a grant report and fundraising meeting—the sort I usually get to hear in the comfort of 399

Park Avenue. We told the IIRR staff that the community had earned this small recognition. Only then were we allowed to help out.

So, thank you all for this award, but the real credit goes to IIRR's hardworking staff and dedicated board of directors, who keep this important work going.

[Read more about IIRR's 50th Anniversary here.](#)

IIRR's Celebration of Earth Day 2010

(SILANG, Cavite, Philippines) – IIRR joined the rest of the world in observing Earth Day 2010 through two events in Silang, Cavite, Philippines, this past April 22. The events coincided with the national observance by the Earth Day Network Philippines with this year's theme of HAMON NG PANAHON: CLIMATE CHANGE, 10 MILYON SOLUSYON (KILOS NA, NGAYON NA!).



A forum and [kakawate](#) planting were conducted on the morning of Earth Day at Sisters of Mary School, Boystown in Silang, Cavite with about 100 students in attendance. Ms. [Maggie Rosimo](#), Program Specialist of IIRR, presented on climate change followed by a presentation on the importance of Bio-Intensive Gardening (BIG) by Mr. [Ronnie Decastro](#), Bio-Intensive Garden Field Facilitator for IIRR.

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