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*The official newsletter of Bangsamoro Agri-Enterprise Programme
Leveraging and Expanding Agri-Aqua Production in Bangsamoro*
People in Need Philippines

BAEP-LEAP

**Bangsamoro Agri-Enterprise Programme
Leveraging and Expanding Agri-Aqua Production in Bangsamoro**



**Learning Together,
Growing Together**

We've been side by side with coffee farmers in Basilan and Sulu, conducting hands-on training on rejuvenation, pruning, and good agricultural practices. These sessions have been spaces where farmers exchange ideas, learn from each other, and gain the skills to bring life back to their coffee farms.

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**Turning Efforts
into Impact**

It only takes one well-pruned tree, one shared lesson, or one revitalized farm to show that change is possible. Communities are now witnessing better practices and renewed pride in their coffee. These steps when multiplied across villages, are reshaping livelihoods and breathing new life into the local coffee industry.

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**Faces and Stories
from the Field**

Behind every cup of coffee is a farmer's story. Today, farmers are gaining new skills and techniques in coffee farming, and they're putting these into practice in their fields and communities. Let's hear their stories and see how this knowledge is transforming their farms.

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Brewing Peace and Reviving Sulu's Coffee

As a significant part of their culture, Filipinos have a deep affection for coffee. In the southern Philippines, within the Sulu archipelago, coffee, especially Kahawa Sug (Sulu coffee) plays a crucial role in the traditions of the Tausug people, one of the largest Moro ethnic groups in Mindanao. Introduced in the 1860s, Kahawa Sug is a name that combines the Arabic word 'qahwah' (for coffee) and the Tausug term 'Sūg' (meaning 'current' and used for the Sulu archipelago), has become an integral part of daily life. Pouring coffee back and forth between cups to cool it down is a cherished ritual. Typically served black, this coffee is enjoyed in Tausug households and local coffee shops, known as kahawaaan, often accompanied by traditional snacks like bangbang or latal.

In the 1990s, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a militant organisation known for its terrorist activities, significantly disrupted coffee farming in the region. The instability and violence confined the consumption of Kahawa Sug primarily to local communities and left once-thriving coffee farms abandoned. Areas like Kabbon Takas in Patikul became ASG strongholds and efforts to neutralise the group further impacted the local community's quality of life.

In 2023, after more than two decades of continuous conflict and evacuations, the Philippine military declared the island of Sulu, including Patikul, free from Abu Sayyaf. Residents of Kabbon Takas have since fully returned and begun rebuilding their homes and livelihoods from scratch. Ahajuli A. Ahajani, the chairperson of barangay (the smallest administrative division

in the Philippines) Kabbon Takas, recounted the hardships they faced, saying, "We struggled with frequent evacuations, and I almost abandoned the idea of coming back out of fear for our lives."

Market Value Chain Assessment Study

Sulu's naturally fertile soil supports the growth of coffee, producing around 7,300 metric tons annually.

According to the Market Value Chain Assessment Study in Sulu and Basilan conducted by BAEP-LEAP in 2021, Sulu ranked third among the top 10 coffee-producing provinces in the Philippines, contributing 8.1% to national production. It also ranked first in producing Excelsa and Liberica varieties and third for Arabica and Robusta nationwide.

Patikul has been a leading coffee-producing municipality in Sulu.

Despite high production rates, most coffee remains local to Mindanao. The conflict in Muslim Mindanao has kept this gem hidden from the rest of the country and hindered external interventions, including training on coffee production, processing, and marketing.

Moreover, the Study in Basilan and Sulu showed a low awareness and application of Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) among coffee farmers in the region, including non-practice of pruning, non-rejuvenation of old coffee trees, and immoderate diversification. These factors have affected the quality and production of coffee beans. Small farmers' limited technical and financial capacity in proper harvest, post-harvest, and processing techniques (e.g., picking, fermenting, drying, sorting) also hinders their ability to compete with export-quality coffee. The long history of isolation has left smallholders and local associations in Sulu with no direct access to larger markets or corporate buyers.

Revitalising Coffee Farming

To bridge the gaps in local coffee production, BAEP-LEAP began its work in Kabbon Takas with a hands-on training on coffee planting, rejuvenation, and fertilisation. Ninety-four farmers, of which fifty-four of them are women, took part



“ We really want to improve our knowledge in coffee processing and, one day, export our coffee ”

☛ Ahajuli A. Ahajani

in the session.

Farmer-leader Ahajani shared his appreciation, “nobody has ever come to our barangay to provide coffee interventions. If LEAP hadn’t been here, we would have stuck to our traditional ways and never improved the quality of our coffee in Patikul.”

He explained that in their community, they only knew the armalite method, a local term for the

single-pass stripping harvest. “We’re eager for more training from PIN and MARADECA (Maranao People Development Center Inc.). We really want to improve our knowledge in coffee processing and, one day, export our coffee,” he added.

While the traditional method has been passed down for generations, farmers are now open to adopting new techniques that can raise quality and open doors to export markets.

Ahajani admits there is still a long way to go in improving Kabbon Takas’ coffee production and processing. But he believes this is the beginning of something greater. With LEAP’s support, the people of Kabbon Takas, Patikul, and Sulu are not only working to revive the kahawa sug industry but also to brew peace and prosperity in their community.

BAEP-LEAP aims to address challenges by providing much-needed training and support to improve coffee production and quality in Basilan and Sulu. The project will also help farmers access broader markets and increase their income.



Empowering Coffee Farmers, Growing Futures

BAEP-LEAP

The Bangsamoro Agri-Enterprise Programme-Leveraging and Expanding Agri-Aqua Production in Bangsamoro (BAEP-LEAP) is a European Union funded project that works with coffee and seaweed farmers, cooperatives, traders/input suppliers, academia and decision makers in the island provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

It aims to promote peaceful, cohesive, secure, and inclusive development of agri- and aquaculture value chains in the Bangsamoro region by enhancing the quality, diversity, consolidation, and market responsiveness of coffee and seaweed production.

This project is implemented by People in Need Philippines, Maranao People Development Center, Inc., and United Youth of the Philippines – Women, Inc.

***Data as of July 2025**

Farmers Reached

In just two years, BAEP-LEAP trained and mentored coffee farmers in Basilan and Sulu, helping revive their local coffee industry.



- **1,056** Farmers
- **59** Cluster Groups

Our Training Journey



Coffee Rejuvenation



Coffee Planting



Integrated Nutrient Management



Integrated Pests and Diseases Management



Coffee Diversification (Vegetable Farming Training)



Training of Trainers on Coffee Production



Adult Learning Training

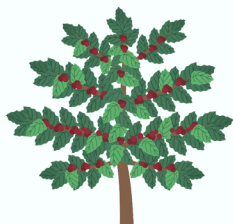


Cascading Training on Coffee Production



Orientation of Cluster Groups on the Formulation of Coffee Association

Our Growing Impact



7,320
Planted

2,422
Rejuvenated

Basilan				Sulu			Total
	Lamitan	Lantawan	Maluso	Patikul	Talipao	Indanan	
Planted	2,930	950	830	970	1015	625	7,320
Rejuvenated	63	2	51	1,347	846	113	2,422

Our Shared Resources



- **Nursery Establishment**
- **Coffee Materials and Tools**
- **Ribbon Tagging of Newly Planted Coffee**
- **Onsite Mentoring**

Collaborations that Made it Happen

Collaborations and complementation activities aim to improve the quality of coffee production in the provinces.



- Office of the Provincial Agriculturist Basilan distributed 7,000 coffee planting materials and assisted in land preparation across three areas (LARBECO, Bohe Besser, and Bohe Ibu).
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform supplied two coffee machines (depulper in Tubigan, Maluso and dehuller in Boheyawas, Lamitan).
- Ministry of Trade, Investments, and Tourism integrated partner farmers into their coffee-related trainings.
- Ministry of Labor and Employment served as resource speakers and supported the formation of coffee associations in seven areas of Basilan and ten areas of Sulu.
- Sulu Coffee Board was established through the Ugnayan Platform of BAEP-LEAP.
- Sulu State College provided auxiliary materials for coffee and vegetables in four areas of Patikul, Sulu.
- National Irrigation Association–Region 9 offered irrigation support in Kabbon Takas, Patikul, Sulu.

Learning Together, Growing Together

Coffee Care and Cultivation: Training of Trainers on Planting, Nutrient Management and Integrated Pests and Diseases Management, and Rejuvenation

In Patikul and Talipao, Sulu, 60 barangay focal leaders took part in a Training of Trainers on Coffee Production under the EU-funded BAEP-LEAP Project. The training focused on practical, farm-ready topics, from planting and pruning to rejuvenation, pest management, and planning for better yields.

Farmers also explored the balance between traditional practices and modern technologies, equipping them to make informed choices for their communities.



I learned to identify good and harmful insects, and how to use natural fertilizers better. There's so much I want to bring back to the farmers in our barangay.



Harulina I. Yusop of Panglayahan, Patikul



Coffee Diversification through Vegetable Farming

In coffee farming, patience is part of the process. Newly planted trees take 3 to 4 years before the first harvest, while rejuvenated ones need 1 to 2 years to fruit again. For many farmers, that waiting period can be tough, especially without a stable source of income.

That's why, we introduced vegetable farming as a practical way to diversify livelihoods in Bulingan, Lamitan City, Basilan.

By planting vegetables alongside their coffee trees, farmers can put food on the table year-round, earn additional income in between coffee harvests, and build more sustainable, resilient farms.





Farmer Cluster Leaders Share Coffee Production Skills

In Lumpung Pigih Daho, Sulu, farmers who joined the BAEP-LEAP coffee production training are now teaching fellow farmers what they've learned, using simple, hands-on demonstrations. They showed how to prune and rejuvenate coffee trees, and how to make organic fertilizer using materials found locally.

One noticeable change was a 40-year-old farm that had never been rejuvenated. The coffee farmer applied the techniques he learned from the cluster leaders' training and his coffee trees are now slowly starting to bear fruits.



Coffee Cluster Leadership Inspires More Women to Lead

More women are now taking the lead in coffee farming by joining our pool of coffee cluster leaders. In Sulu, 17 of the 32 coffee cluster leaders joined a recent refresher training were women, showing a growing shift in leadership roles. The session gave them space to revisit good farming practices, share how their confidence has grown, and talk about building trust, teamwork, and ensuring no one is left behind.



In Basilan, coffee cluster leaders from 10 barangays, 3 municipalities, and the Larbeco Cooperative gathered for a leveling-off meeting under the BAEP-LEAP project. They strengthened their understanding of the project, clarified their roles, and shared lessons from the field. The meeting closed with a signed commitment to continue supporting sustainable and inclusive agri-aqua development in their communities.

Through these regular gatherings, local coffee champions, especially women, are becoming stronger voices for change in their provinces.

Indigenous and Muslim Communities Craft Social Business Models with Zakat Values

Indigenous Peoples and Muslim community members came together for a three-day workshop on designing social enterprises rooted in justice, environmental care, and community wellbeing. Guided by Zakat principles and Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), participants explored how culture, faith, and enterprise can work hand in hand. Sessions covered social impact, peacebuilding, cultural identity, financial management, and marketing, culminating in business pitches that reflect both tradition and innovation.





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Coffee is very important to us here in Sulu. It's our main source of livelihood, and the people here truly love it. During the conflict, many abandoned their coffee farms. We're thankful that now there are agencies helping our communities, enhancing our knowledge in coffee farming and teaching us new techniques, like how to rejuvenate trees.



Hurulina I. Yusop, Sulu

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As farmers, we truly need training for all of us to learn. That way, even if the agencies leave, we'll know how to manage things on our own and keep going with the knowledge we've gained.

Rudy Montezo - Boheyawas Small Farmers Association, Basilan



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If you plant coffee and know how to care for it, it's a long-term source of livelihood. That's why this project is such a great opportunity, it gives us valuable knowledge, unlike one-time aid that's given and gone. Because of this, many have been encouraged to return to planting coffee.

Romie Angalis - Boheyawas Small Farmers Association, Basilan



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Here at the Office of the Provincial Agriculture (OPaG), we work closely with BAEP. That's why we attend these trainings, so we can share what we learn with others. Together we aim to increase the income in the community, improve the local economy through coffee production, and support efforts to make Sulu a leading coffee producer once again. Inshallah, we will achieve that!



Virginia Arreza, OPaG, Sulu

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We've now set up nurseries and built a solar dryer. Drying coffee on the ground or by the roadside is now prohibited by our barangay local government. We've learned that drying on bare soil is bad for the quality of our coffee.

Munih Sahi, Sulu



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As the barangay chairperson of Kabbon Takas, I started planting first to set an example for the community. I'm grateful to BEAP-LEAP for teaching us how to properly plant, rejuvenate, and prune our coffee trees. We will plant more, improve our quality, and work towards exporting our produce.



Ahajuli Ahajani, Sulu

