

THE GLOBAL EXCHANGE CONNECT

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From the Philippines to the Sandbox: Giselle Aris Brings Exciting Guests to Development Dialogue

Linking her research during her graduate studies at the University of Oxford to the Development Dialogue Conference, Senior Fellow Giselle Aris secured invitations for two honored guests, Ms. Rowena B. Gonnay and Mr. Jimmy Lingayo of the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project of the Philippines, to attend the Development Dialogue as a Keynote Speaker and Panelist. Though Ms. Gonnay said that in the Philippines “when we say farmer, you belong to a lowly group, the manual laborers” Ms. Gonnay and Mr. Lingayo were a major hit at the conference and some of the most popular speakers.

Giselle met Ms. Gonnay and Mr. Lingayo while researching her master's thesis, which focused on different forms of agricultural cooperatives and analyzing their effectiveness in tackling poverty in the rural developing world. Giselle explored the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project as the central case study and conducted her primary fieldwork in the upland rice terraces of the Cordillera Mountains. Giselle recognized how valuable it could be for Ms. Gonnay and Mr. Lingayo to share their work with the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project at Development Dialogue and worked with the Deshpande Foundation to bring Ms. Gonnay, a farmer and a Municipal Coordinator for the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project, and Mr. Lingayo, who is a farmer and Provincial Coordinator for the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project, to attend the Development Dialogue conference and share their unique perspective from the grassroots level of development.



Both Ms. Gonnay's speech and participation in the Keynote panel and Mr. Lingayo's role on the panel “Organic Farming: Back to the Future” made a remarkable impact on the conference. Both speakers received rave reviews, and throughout the conference they both engaged in numerous conversations with various delegates and speakers about their work and innovative approach towards enhancing the livelihoods of small-scale ricers farmers through organic farming and fair trade.

Other highlights throughout Ms. Gonnay's and Mr. Lingayo's visit to the Sandbox included a visit to the AME Foundation in Dharwad, where they learned about work taking place to promote sustainable agriculture practices and met with farmers in Hulukoppa. During their visit to AME, they engaged in a range of discussions about the differences and similarities they observed between farming practices in the Sandbox and in the Philippines. Mr. Lingayo and Ms. Gonnay also participated and shared their experiences in the newly created Community Mela, a Development Dialogue event organized to bring together constituents from the community, including farmers, students, professionals and beneficiaries of the Deshpande Foundation's NGO partners.

Throughout their time in the Hubli Sandbox, Mr. Lingayo and Ms. Gonnay met with Desh and Jaishree Deshpande, interacted with students of the Deshpande Fellowship Program, participated in site visits, and even managed to squeeze in a visit to Hampi with Giselle to enjoy a local historical site.

A big congratulations to Giselle for bringing such wonderful guests to the Development Dialogue conference to share their experiences with us! Having Mr. Lingayo and Ms. Gonnay in the Hubli Sandbox was a great opportunity for cultural, agricultural, and personal exchange for Development Dialogue delegates on so many levels and we are thrilled that Mr. Lingayo and Ms. Gonnay were able to join us and share their unique perspective on rural grassroots development.