

## “MY BIODIVERSITY EXPERIENCE”

Kabankalan City, Philippines – Biodiversity? What is biodiversity? I had often heard this word since I was about 7 years of age in school, in church, in television and in many instances, especially from my grand father in my maternal side who is also an active advocate of clean and renewable energy, safe and clean environment, biodiversity conservation and environmental protection. However, I only realized its deeper meaning when I was given the opportunity to participate in the Marine Youth Camp sponsored by the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc (PRRCFI), the Province of Negros Occidental, the various German Development Cooperation organizations and the Kabankalan-Himamaylan-Ilog Integrated Coastal Area Management Council (KAHIL ICAMC) on May 4-6, 2010 at Danjungan Island, Municipality of Cauayan, Province of Negros Occidental, Philippines as one of the Provincial support activities on the Launching of the United Nations’ International Biodiversity Day (IBD) on May 22, 2010 at Bacolod City.



Biodiversity to me before was simply a call for the protection and rehabilitation of our environment, tree-planting, reforestation, fish protection and the like. It was through this short exposure of mine in this Biodiversity Youth Camp at Danjungan Island that I have realized, internalized and broadened my understanding of the importance of Biodiversity conservation. My initial learning on biodiversity from the series of lectures given by experts and my first actual experience on what our ecosystem is all about and its importance to our human lives from bird watching, marine life and other coastal resources identification from mangroves to sea grass, corals and the various species of fishes in the Island made me conclude that we must live in harmony with the environment. Had it not been for this Youth Camp, I would, probably, never had known a mangrove and how it provides a breeding place for fishes in the ocean. This made me realized that biodiversity now means, LIFE. Yes, LIFE, my life and your life. You protect biodiversity and you protect LIFE. Yes, you protect life and not only your life but also my life and that of others. When I was elected by the group, during our Youth Camp, as the Coordinator of the KAHIL ICAMC\* Youth Environmentalists Society-City of Kabankalan (KAHIL ICAMC YES-CoK) and the Over-All Coordinator of KAHIL ICAMC-YES, I was challenged to take the responsibility of leading these young environmentalists into a new direction and more meaningful outlook in life. I am 15 going 16, apprehensive and shy, but my biodiversity experience in Danjungan Island, remove from me some of those apprehensions and shyness which are holding me back to realize my potentials as a person and instead developed in me a higher level of self-confidence.

My biodiversity experience in Danjungan Island will always remain an important part of my personal development and a memorable experience in my life that is worth living and sharing with others. *Kisshia Lhea Tanmoya-Torres, 15, City of Kabankalan, Province of Negros Occidental, Philippines 6111.*

*\*KAHIL ICAMC, an alliance of 3 Local government units Kabankalan- Ilog- Himamaylan Integrated Coastal and Aquatic Management Council for the purpose of collective management of their coastal resources.*