

Ripple effect

Reinier A. Tinapay



N. Hicks/WWI/Still Pictures

Tree planting, recycling drives and eco-camps were all part of my life at school, but I went on itching for a deeper understanding of what it means to be an advocate for the environment. So when I heard about a new weekly radio programme called 'Environment Patrol', I immediately auditioned. I was drafted in as news anchor. Before long, we had established ourselves as an influential force in environmental advocacy. We became involved with other organizations, including the Watershed Management Youth Council, a young and vibrant group involved in water, the most precious resource in the city of Davao in the far south of the Philippines. A barrage of activities followed: now I was doing more than just planting trees.

We uncovered an illegal 6.7-hectare banana plantation inside the Mount Apo Protected Area near Davao. To make things worse, the investor was planning to construct a motorized cable car over an adjacent river, critical to the watershed. Irreparable damage seemed imminent, so we took a stand before the City Council and – together with other organizations and small farmers' cooperatives – filed a case against the plantation in December 2001.

It was a tough battle, and tensions rose high – but we fought on, and people slowly began to support us. Finally, after almost two years of hearing after hearing, we won our case. The council ordered the removal of the plantation and the forest's rehabilitation at the developer's expense.

Our success gave strength to other organizations and small farmers threatened by illegal plantations, and they too started to stand up and fight. In case after case, errant plantations were uncovered and brought to court.

Now I have had the honour of being elected to represent Asia and the Pacific as a Tunza Youth Advisor, at the recent International Youth Conference in Bangalore, India. There I met others like me – young people motivated to bring about sustainability. I shared our success story, and realized that others could be inspired by it. I went as an individual, but came home a comrade.

Truly, a single drop can make a thousand ripples. Even in our youth, we can all become catalysts of change.

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DON'T DESERT DRYLANDS!

Look out

for World Environment Day (WED) 2006 – Monday 5 June. The theme for this year is Deserts and Desertification and the slogan is 'Don't Desert Drylands!' The main celebrations will take place in Algiers, Algeria. This is the first time this United Nations day will be held in North Africa.

You can participate in commemorating this important day by organizing activities in your community or country. These should be simple but powerful environmental activities, if possible relating to the 2006 WED theme, and should engage young people in raising environmental awareness.

Previous WED activities have included painting competitions; a photo competition exhibition; tree planting; clean-ups; recycling efforts; symposiums and workshops. Sports activities could also be organized. For more ideas on how WED can be celebrated, please visit UNEP's website at www.unep.org/wed/.

Remember that whatever event or activity you select should be easy to implement, and educative and attractive to people in your community, particularly young people.

As usual, we would like to encourage you and your organizations to liaise with the UNEP office in your region to find out how you can cooperate on WED activities.

Finally, let us know what you plan to do by completing the 'Register Your Activity' form on the WED website. This information will be included in the Around the World section of the website in the 2006 global activity report.