



# Corruption Watch

A monthly newsletter of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Project

*Our daily deeds define each part of our soul...*

*- anonymous*

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## CREATING WAVES

It started with a simple question which came out from a plain conversation among an NGO Representative and two government employees. That was: "how much of the city's funds were wasted on vehicles?"

Then the question rippled into a concept of addressing issues regarding funds wastage.

A week passed by and the concept became a project. When the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) positively responded to ECOLINK's proposal of an anti-corruption initiative which would focus on government vehicles' procurement, use and maintenance, excitement grew among the stakeholders - the DILG, etc.

Since the ACT's launching, the initiative had made significant strides in empowering the citizens of the locality to participate in the drive to curb corruption. Coupled with the active vehicle monitoring scheme, the "Bantay Kurapsyon" Radio program immediately won the people's trust and confidence. Reactions, both positive and negative (although mostly positive), were earned. From the City officials down to tricycle drivers and market vendors, the project stirred each conscious being.

The billowing impacts of the project to the lives of the people and the affairs of governance in the City are testimonies to ECOLINK's commitment of finding ways to curb corruption at the local levels.

We hope that we could stand by the expectations of the people at one hand, and firm up cooperation with the Local Government in developing administrative reforms on the other.

Happy New Year!

  
Paul Pastrano Gangoso  
ECOLINK Executive Director

## ACT PROJECT LAUNCHED

The Anti-Corruption and Transparency Project or ACT was formally launched last December 15, 2006 at Kamayan sa Oro Restaurant, Oroquieta City.

The luncheon ceremony was attended by students from MONHS, MOTI, C-Ian Institute, Stella Maris College and Misamis University most of whom are campus journalists, and by members of the mainstream Media community. The ECOLINK Executive Director, Paul Pastrano Gangoso, formally opened the program with a presentation of the project's goal and objectives and an initial data on vehicle misuse.



Although the Mayor himself was not able to attend due to conflicting schedules, the Honorable City Vice-Mayor Lemuel Meyrick C. Acosta gave an inspiring message of support to the project and to the people behind the initiative. Atty. Lel Blanco of the Sangguniang Panlungsod was also present during the launching and gave some insights on the possible impacts of the project to the problems presently faced by the Local Government.

During the ceremony, questions were raised in regard to the mode of participation of ordinary citizens in the drive to prevent wastage of government funds. These were answered one by one and the issue at hand was clarified. Then a message from Pierre Mills of the Partnership for Transparency Fund or (PTF) was read by the Ms. Evan Labrilla, Project Coordinator of the ACT.

The Anti-Corruption and Transparency Project is an initiative of the Environmental Cooperation and Linkages Inc. (ECOLINK) funded by the Partnership for Transparency Fund/ADB/WF in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government- CLGOO and other concerned agencies. The project hopes to prevent and/or curb corruption in the local government through a series of components that will reduce wastages of funds as a result of corrupt practices relevant to vehicle procurement, use and maintenance, increase citizens' participation in such efforts, and strengthen relevant local mechanisms.

With its successful launching, the people behind the project and the whole of Oroquieta City have high hopes of attaining its defined objectives.

The culture of corruption in the Philippines is undeniably rampant and seemingly incurable. Public funds are being wasted in several ways and basic services and developmental programs aimed at uplifting the lives of people are being set aside.

Despite several anti-corruption programs initiated by the government over the past two decades, bureaucracies from the national to down the local offices remain resilient against the initiatives against corruption. Thousands of corruption cases are hardly moving forward in the Office of Ombudsman. In such a condition, no amount of International Aid can help ease up the country's widespread poverty and the never-ending insurgency, most especially in the island of Mindanao.

The City of Oroquieta is a sub-rural/ sub-urban area in the northern part of Mindanao. Agricultural production remains the backbone of its economy with majority of its population depending on individual, traditional farm production for a living. There are no significant industrial or commercial plants operating in the locality and nearby municipalities.

Despite its sluggish economic progress, Oroquieta City is blessed with abundant natural resources like rivers and rain-forests. In fact, it has been coffered nationally as the "Cleanest and Greenest Component City" in the entire Philippines for several years already. The "Layawan" river, the source of potable water to Oroquieta's 30 thousands households, is also known as the cleanest river in the whole island of Mindanao. It has also recently received a Hall of Fame Award for Peace and Order.

Several ODA-funded programs focusing on environmental conservation are presently pouring in to the City as well as the whole province. And the present Local Government Administration has pledged for transparent and accountable public governance.

The Local Government of Oroquieta City depends mainly on the central government's Internal Revenue Allotment for the delivery of services to its constituents. But it can be observed that despite its having a limited budget, public funds are also wasted in several ways and dimensions.

A particular aspect of this is on the practices of and expenditures for government vehicle procurement, use and maintenance. Budgetary allocations intended for community-level socio-economic development are squandered instead for the purchase of gasoline, overpriced vehicle costs and vehicle misuse.

The existing local mechanisms on curbing internal corruption are weak, if not totally absent. Also, citizens of the city do not have the available medium to express criticism on corruption. If such abuses continue unchecked, millions of pesos from people's taxes will be totally pocketed by a few greedy officials and personnel.



*Sending children to and from the school is one of the most common forms of vehicle misuse. The picture above is a good example.*



**Message from  
Pierre Landel -Mills, President,  
Partnership for Transparency Fund,  
to Mr. Paul Pastrano Gangoso,  
Executive Director of ECOLINK**

We in the Partnership for Transparency Fund are delighted to learn of the launching of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Project of Environmental Cooperation and Linkages, Inc. (ECOLINK). This is a landmark day for PTF also as this is our first project in Mindanao.

Corruption is undesirable in any society, but for a developing country like the Philippines it is an issue of critical proportion as it undermines the economic and social development of the country and harms the poor most. Corruption in the resource allocation and delivery of services for the poor leads to illiteracy, poor health standards, crime and, therefore, low productivity. Even more worrying is the damage the corruption causes to the sense of national belonging of individual citizens.

Thus, the cost of corruption to the society is immeasurable. Fighting corruption is not only a challenge. It is a matter of moral obligation and a responsibility of the civil society.

I want to congratulate you and ECOLINK for accepting this responsibility by launching the Anti-Corruption and Transparency project. In the context of the province or city, this is a modest effort, but one that can have substantial long-lasting benefits. The most important benefit will be creating an awareness about corruption and a realization on the part of the local civil society, especially the young people, that they can take effective measures to reduce if not eliminate corruption in their city.

I also commend the Governments of the City of Oroquieta for its cooperation with ECOLINK in this project. This cooperation reflects the dedication of the city government to the welfare of the local people.

The Partnership for Transparency Fund is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to helping civil society play an effective role in the design, implementation and monitoring of national anti-corruption programs. Earlier, I said that this is the first project PTF is supporting in Mindanao. **I want to assure you that we hope that this will not be the only one. I expect that, building on the success of this project, we will be able to support many more in the future.** It will be a great pleasure to all of us in PTF to join your efforts in fighting corruption. I wish you all the success.

*P. Landel-Mills*

## "BANTAY KURAPSYON" RADIO PROGRAM CLAIMS HIGH LISTENERS' RATING

An independent survey recently revealed that of all public affairs broadcast programs, the "Bantay Kurapsyon" claims an unexpected high listener's rating.

Although the program airs only every Monday, at least 17 text messages every day have been received by the anchors since the radio program first aired. Most documented reports of actual vehicle misuse came from radio listeners.

Reports of vehicle misuse, complaints against corrupt practices and discussions on issues concerning government vehicle procurement, use and maintenance and continually given attention by the program.

The "Bantay Kurapsyon" can be heard on the air every Monday 12:30 – 1PM at 91.3 MhZ- Radio One FM Station. Queries and complaints can be sent to: 09203091704 or 09059445100.

## RADIO STATION LAUNCHES SIMILAR DRIVE AGAINST RED PLATE VEHICLES

Pagadian City's leading AM Station recently launched a campaign dubbed "Bantay Opisina" (Govt. Office Watch) which monitors red plated vehicles being used by government officials and employees for purposes other than official transactions.

Inspired by the "Bantay Kurapsyon"'s high listener's rating, Amid Bangis, Program Director of RMN Pagadian, claims that the approach of identifying and documenting vehicles caught in actual misuse is very effective.

Officials and employees reported of misuse immediately corrected themselves and refrained from using such vehicles for personal use.

But unlike the ACT project which aims to develop mechanisms within the Local Government in preventing funds wastage relative to vehicle use and maintenance, the "Bantay Opisina" is constrained to monitoring red plated vehicle and inciting public opinion on such corrupt practices.

### What do the people say about the ACT initiative? Well, let's quote a few...

*"We have been waiting for such a program here in the city. Thank you so much for initiating it. Rest assured our lasting support. God bless."* from (0910- XXX-XXXX)

*"Misuse of government vehicles is now one of the most rampant forms of corruption. Personally I am very happy to know that from now on there is already one trusted medium in our city that will cater complaints of our beloved citizens. Congratulations to ECOLINK and its staff. Keep up the good work and rest assured the full support of the Sangguniang Panlungsod."* from Hon. Vice Mayor Lemuel Meyrick Acosta

*"Corruption can never be corrected overnight for it has already become a part of our culture. But what is important now is that the people can see we are no longer tolerating it. Congratulations to the ACT project."* - Hon. Lel Blanco, City Councilor of Oroquieta



*Gamblers could easily identify the place in this photo. But anyone could see and read the motorcycle's red plate. This photo was taken on a Sunday in the cockpit. The report came from a concerned fellow "gambler".*



*The RHOVIC 's Bar seems a favorite past time for government employees. And also a top spot of government vehicles used during midnight sessions. (Above and below)*



*Ania na ang programa sa radyo gimugna para sa katawhan ug alang sa katawhan; Atangi ug paminaw sa.....*

# "Bantay Kurapsyon"

**DXNA-FM(Radio One)91.3 MHz  
Matag Lunes 12:30-1:00 sa Hapon**

*Mga opinyong legal ug pulitikal gikan sa mga inilang personahe;*

*Mga reklamo, mulo ug panlantaw ngadto sa atong lokal nga kagamhanan;*

*Mga pagtuki ug pagsaway nga walay pamulitika!*

# Vehicle Misuse

As of January 23, 2007, the ECOLINK has already documented more than 61 vehicles in actual (unverified) misuse.

## Monitor

The 4 most common misuse cases are:

1. Weekends
2. Sending children to and from the school.
3. Grocery shopping / market
4. Beyond office hours/ drinking/ leisure at the park



## MORE THAN 50 CHARGED FOR UNAUTHORIZED USE OF GOVT VEHICLES

THE Office of the Ombudsman yesterday filed administrative and criminal charges against some 50 officials and employees who were found using government vehicles for unofficial purposes.

Among those charged were Silvestre Uy of Philippine Amusement Gaming Corp.; Corazon Ginete, assistant secretary at the Office of the Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process; Ramon Tionloc of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration; Quezon City Councilor Eric Medina; Elizabeth Navalta of the Department of Energy; and Department of Trade and Industry official Jesus Motoomuil. They will be charged for violation of Article 217 of the Revised Penal Code (Malversation of Public Funds or Property), Republic Act 6713 (Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees), the Government Accounting and Auditing Manual (GAAM), and Executive Order 292 on dishonesty, grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

Last May 2006, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez suspended for six months without pay Cebu Port Authority (CPA) general manager Mariano Martinez for simple misconduct.

Martinez was found to have used a CPA vehicle to bring his daughter to and from school.

The case was the result of work done by task force Oplan Red Plate, chaired by Assistant Ombudsman Mark E. Jalandoni, which was created by Gutierrez to run after government officials and employees who violate rules governing the use of government vehicles.

The task force was a response to mounting complaints received by the Ombudsman on the rampant misuse of government vehicles.

Gutierrez said their discreet monitoring is continuing and people can report any unauthorized use of government vehicles by calling the telephone numbers 926-9765 or 926-9032, or sending an email to ombtfredplate@ombudsman.gov.ph

## ILOILO LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN AGAINST ABUSE OF GOVT. VEHICLES

The People's Graft Watch of Iloilo Inc. (PGII), and the Office of the Ombudsman collaboratively launches a campaign against abuse of government vehicles in line with the national "Operation Red Plate" campaign.

They have tapped students from college and high schools to report officials and employee sending off children and family members to schools using red plated vehicles.

Msgr. Meliton Oso of the Jaro Archdiocesan Social Action Center said: *"starting with the young will help our campaign, especially in the long term. We are teaching the young that it is safe to be watchdogs of abuses in the government."*



The Media Community is the most appreciative towards the ACT initiative. (above)



The participants of the launching ceremony-employees and students.



Well, obviously full of soft drinks and groceries. Where's the party by the way?



Promoting Transparency in Governance through Citizen Participation

Join the Interschool "Photojournalism Contest" & "Short-play Competition"

March 2, 2007 ABC Gym, Oroquieta City

IPU (Photojournalism) & PUS (Short-play)

Verifrank Photojournalism

100% Award-Winning

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

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Logos: APT, OJI, ADB, DepEd

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