# VALUING ECOSYSTEM SERVICES TOGETHER (VEST): A SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR THE PROMOTION OF PES IN NORTHERN MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

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In December 2011, tropical storm Washi (local name Sendong) hit the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan in the Philippines, leaving 10,000 residents homeless and close to 2,000 dead. One of the contributing factors to such devastation is the massive forest denudation in the twin peaks of Bukidnon, Mount Kitanglad and Mount Kalatungan.

A Xavier University-based initiative, called Valuing Ecosystem Services Together (VEST) was launched in November 2013, with the objectives of raising awareness, and creating ripples of positive change towards payment for ecosystem services (PES) in Cagayan de Oro. The sellers, an indigenous tribe of Mount Kalatungan in Talakag, Bukidnon have partnered with a local foundation to help them sell two services: flood control, and clean and potable water. Such services were identified by the seller's community development plan. A survey was done in five sectors, namely, corporations, cooperatives, churches, schools, and households.

VEST was conceptualized as a social marketing strategy for PES, where a slew of information, educational and communication efforts were done. The VEST brand was developed in partnership with the indigenous tribe, the Talaandigs. Traditional and modern media forms were utilized: radio plugs, television guestings, photographs and news articles, songs and MTVs, short documentary films, lectures, posters and flyers, social media, and Web sites.

These VEST efforts resulted in partnerships with corporations and a federation of cooperatives in Mindanao, the adopting of PES policies by local government units, the issuance of memorandum order endorsing the inclusion of VEST in the curriculum of higher education institutions in Northern Mindanao, and increased and new collaborations with the buyers, among others.

Future plans for VEST include the production of more information, educational and communication materials such as a full-length documentary film, a regular radio program, TV ads, increase and intensify partnerships with various sectors, such as water service and electric service companies, local government units, PES awards, and an annual public forum.