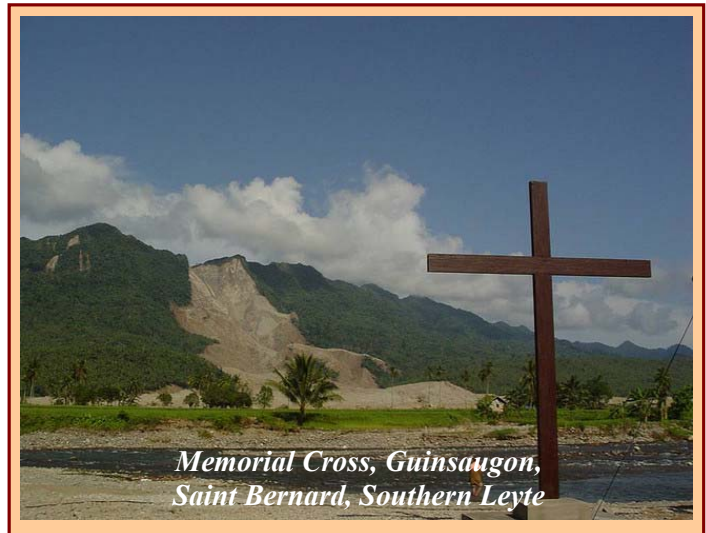


Saint Bernard: A Journey to Recovery

Saint Bernard was just a quiet municipality of Southern Leyte until it captured international attention when a catastrophic landslide wiped-out the entire Barangay of Guinsaugon on February 17, 2006.

The tragedy which claimed more than a thousand lives challenged the local government unit (LGU) to rise above the destruction. Years have passed, and a new Guinsaugon village rises with the help and support of Gawad Kalinga, Philippine National Red Cross, Japan

International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Habitat for Humanity, GIZ, and other local and international communities.



History The municipality of Saint Bernard was formerly one of the most progressive barangays of Cabalian, Leyte (now San Juan) called Barangay Himatagon. It was considered as the biggest and most densely populated barangay at that time. As the barangay progressed socially, economically and politically, the inhabitants felt the need of self-governance.

Graciano H. Capili, a village leader who then became the first town Mayor, sent petitions to higher authorities appealing for the conversion of the said barangay into a municipality. The conversion took several years. With the untiring efforts of former Governor Bernardo Torres of Leyte, the late President Ramon Magsaysay enacted Executive Order No. 84, converting Barangay Himatagon into a Municipality of Saint Bernard on December 9, 1954.

Demography Saint Bernard registered a total population of 25,252 in the 2007 Census of Population, posting an annual growth rate of 1.24%. Average household size stood at 4.9. It has a total land area of 100.2 square kilometers. Population density is recorded at 252 persons per square kilometer. About 80% of the populace is predominantly Roman Catholic.



Geography Saint Bernard is strategically located in the eastern portion of Southern Leyte. It is a coastal town along the Panaon Island, Hinunangan-Silago National Road. It is bounded on the north by the town of Hinunangan, on the south, the Panaon Strait and Cabalian Bay, on the east by the municipality of San Juan and Anahawan, and on the west, the municipality of Libagon.

Hazards and Disasters Geographically, Saint Bernard is vulnerable to disasters. Next to Malitbog, the municipality is prone to

landslides, with 24 out of 30 barangays classified by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) as at-risk areas. Adjacent barangays to Guinsaugon, namely, Sug-angon, Ayahag, Nueva Esperanza, Magatas, Hinabian, Kauswagan and Tabontabon are classified as permanent high-risk areas. The heavily silted Lawigan River makes the municipality prone to floods. Residents of most flood-prone areas evacuate at least 10 times a year. Mt. Cabalian in San Juan, an adjacent municipality, is classified as potentially active.

Climate The municipality is endowed with a tropical climate, dry, wet and very wet (December-January) season. Temperature ranges from 21°C to 32°C.

Financial Resources Saint Bernard is classified as 4th class municipality. Its Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) amounted to P46.9 million in 2011 which translates to an IRA per capita of P1,768. The municipality has the fourth smallest IRA to spend among the eighteen (18) municipalities of Southern Leyte.

Socio-Economic Activities The municipality is mainly an agricultural area. Farming and fishing are two major economic activities. Major crops include palay, coconut and abaca. Some families are engaged in livestock raising. Surigao Strait is the municipality's rich fishing ground.

Poverty Situation In 2003, the municipality ranked 2nd poorest in terms of poverty incidence among the 18 municipalities of Southern Leyte. Its poverty incidence was estimated at 36.3% which indicates that 1 in every 3 individuals in the municipality is poor.

Education The municipality has a total of 26 government elementary schools and 3 government secondary schools in SY 2011-2012.

Guinsaugon Recovery After the tragic landslide in Guinsaugon, various programs and projects were implemented to rehabilitate the place. Among these were the relocation and rehabilitation of the Guinsaugon landslide affected families, construction of villages to indigents, livelihood programs to the displaced families, installation of an Early Warning System Program, rehabilitation of Lawigan River, and the coastal and environment clean-up drive.

The municipality was also driven to strengthen its Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC). Hazard assessments conducted after the tragedy revealed that 70% of the total land area of Saint Bernard is highly vulnerable to almost all types of calamities. The MDCC immediately gave priority to capacity-building projects, regular flood/tsunami/landslide/earthquake drills, incorporating disaster preparedness in the Executive Legislative Agenda, small-scale and non-structural mitigation projects, early warning systems, among others.



In 2008, Saint Bernard has been cited as Gawad Kalasag Grand Prize winner for having the best Contingency Plan and Disaster Preparedness/Disaster Risk Reduction Management Program. In 2009, the municipality also got 3rd Place.

Initiated in 1998, Gawad Kalasag is the National Disaster Coordinating Council's (NDCC) recognition scheme in its search for excellence on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and humanitarian assistance. It aims to recognize outstanding performance of LDCCs, private/volunteer organizations, local, national and international NGOs, donor agencies, and the communities as major stakeholders in implementing significant DRM projects and activities and, in providing humanitarian response and assistance to affected communities. It also aims to recognize individuals, groups or institutions that have shown extraordinary courage, heroism, self-sacrifice, and bravery in times of natural and man-made emergencies and disasters.

Vision Saint Bernard envisions to become an agriculturally productive, progressive, healthy, resilient community with committed, united, honest public servants and environmentally conscious and God-loving citizenry.

Getting There Saint Bernard is accessible by land and sea. It is approximately 168 kilometers away by land travel from Tacloban City via Maharlika Highway. By sea, daily ferry and fast craft trips are available from Cebu to the ports of Hilongos and Bato.

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**Saint Bernard: A Journey to Recovery
 A Municipal Profile**

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