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HEALTH - Seeing the Bajaus' need for medical attention, the Claretian Missionaries in Basilan have recently organized a medical mission for them.

The Claretians gathered around 400 Bajaus and some settlers to avail of the free services during the medical mission on May 29 in Brgy. Townsite in Maluso, Basilan.

Bro. Nicer Natulla, CMF of the Claret Samal Foundation, Inc. (CSFI), who organized the free clinic, said the medical mission is one way of showing concern for the Bajaus who are considered one of the marginalized indigenous peoples (IP) in the Philippines.

"This is not only a medical mission but a promotion of the Bajau culture as the doctors and nurses will see the kind of living they have here in Basilan," Natulla said during an interview with CBCP News.

Dr. Petra Japos who is one of those who joined the medical mission said it was her first time to visit Basilan and she felt sad about the Bajaus' situation.

One of her observations is that the children have skin diseases like scabies, saying parents, as well as the kids themselves should be taught good hygiene in order to prevent diseases.

"Education is really important and they need to value good hygiene," Japos said.

She added that it's a good thing that the foundation has offered the Bajaus scholarships from

pre-school until college.

“After seeing the situation they are in, we will do our best to find sponsors for the continuation of the scholarship program,” Japos said, adding that she looks forward to having another medical mission in Basilan soon.

The Bajaus have availed of the free consultation, circumcision for children, and tooth extraction courtesy of the Municipality of Maluso who provided medicine; Department of Health from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (DOH-ARMM); Armed Forces of the Philippines; and the Community-Based Health Services (CBHS) of Zamboanga City and of Davao City. One doctor, one dentist, and five nurses joined the medical mission.

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