

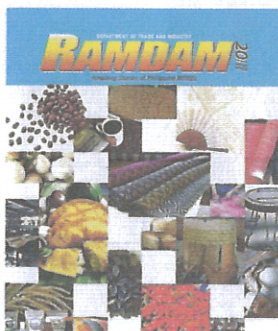
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

RAMDAM

20/15

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REGIONAL OPERATIONS GROUP



RAMDAM, Inspiring stories of Philippine MSMEs

Ramdram, which literally translates to "felt," is a Filipino word that best describes the effectiveness of DTI programs geared towards MSMEs' growth. This sentient feeling demonstrates success in the endeavors of the enterprising individuals and groups and fires with inspiration those who



DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

RAMDAM 20/15

Inspiring Stories of Philippine MSMEs

DTI 2010-2015 RAMDAM MAGAZINE
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| Foreword



Over the past six years, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has laid a solid foundation to make trade and industry relevant to development, and particularly to inclusive growth. The vision we set in 2011 of “A more prosperous Philippines by 2016,” has become tangible with the global recognition of our country’s remarkable economic performance and growing competitiveness.

Over time, DTI’s programs and projects have become even more meaningful and relevant to the lives we touched through the strategic assistance we rendered in our quest to attain inclusive growth. We are particularly proud of the 536,893 micro, small, and medium enterprises we assisted from 2010 to 2015 that generated a total of 2,310,239 jobs all over the country.

In the last six months of the Aquino administration, we went full speed ahead to pursue a better business environment to boost our country’s competitiveness and productivity. We practiced what we preached and aligned trade and industry policies with MSME priorities. We gained ground with strong collaborative partnerships with the private sector and stakeholders. It is our commitment to sustain the gains we have made and to move forward with unwavering commitment and determination to achieve new milestones.

The agency will keep to the highest standards of performance in all aspects of its work, continue to think creatively, and act strategically to translate organizational goals into meaningful results. The DTI will make certain that the culture of excellence we all worked hard to establish will be continuously nurtured to continue providing the Filipino people with “Serbisyon Higit Pa Sa Inaasahan.”

With this publication, we present to the Filipino people the milestones we achieved in half a decade, thanks to our entire workforce — from the provinces, the regions, and all over the world who performed the best they could despite the often challenging circumstances.

This publication is a special testament to our Regional Operations Group and all our front-liners in the regional and provincial offices. RAMDAM 2010-2015 would not have been possible without their hard work, commitment, and dedication.


Atty. Adrian Soriano Cristobal Jr.
Secretary

Introduction



With great pride, we present to you the Department's RAMDAM achievements from 2010 – 2015 through a collection of inspiring stories of real people. Their testimonies show that success did not happen overnight. Notwithstanding their diverse experiences towards success, they share a lot in common. Their business started out as an idea, a dream. Once they had chosen the path for their business, they persevered and remained committed. They kept their goals in sight and kept on moving forward, no matter how slowly. They learned the hard lessons that helped them achieve their goals. They took risks and dared to plunge. They believed in themselves and in the people they worked with. To these individuals and groups, accomplishment is a journey, not a destination.

It was along this journey that they crossed paths with DTI. With DTI as their partner, they saw and seized the opportunity to become better, more effective, more efficient, and more likely to hold on to success. As an enabler of business, DTI, with relentless zeal, continues to develop and grow resilient, innovative, and competitive micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through a host of program and service offerings. Fostering the growth and development of more MSMEs means more jobs for fellow Filipinos. A strong and competitive MSME sector is a potent driver of inclusive growth, especially in the countryside.

The past five years is filled with numerous anecdotes from grateful beneficiaries. Some of them spoke of how the 1,681 Shared Service Facility (SSF) projects created a positive impact on their lives and on their communities. Through the SSF project, tools, equipment, and facilities were turned-over to

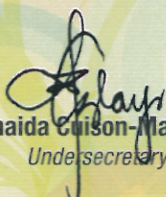
cooperatives, sectors, groups, and institutions to enable them to grow their businesses, under a shared system. Fabrication Laboratories (FabLabs) have been established to serve the various needs of the MSMEs.

The success stories of these individuals and groups mirror our agency's achievements, inspiring us to work even harder in furthering the growth of businesses and in empowering our countrymen to succeed in their business endeavours.

We hope that this publication provides an inspiration to everyone – existing and potential entrepreneurs, MSME managers, students, and the entire DTI family – to join forces in advancing a sustainable and inclusive economic growth that redounds to a better quality of life for all Filipinos.

Congratulations to our regional and provincial offices, on whose doors these successful individuals and groups have knocked on, along their journey to success. You have done us proud.

On behalf of the Regional Operations Group, we express our profound gratitude and appreciation to former Secretary Gregory L. Domingo and Secretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. for the exemplary leadership provided to us all these years. Thank you very much.


Zenaida Cuison-Maglaya
Undersecretary

Banner Programs and Initiatives

MSME Development Plan 2011 - 2016

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MSMED) Plan 2011 - 2016 lays out the overall framework on MSME development. It envisions to raise to 40% the economic contribution of Philippine MSMEs to gross value added (GVA), and to generate employment for 2 million by 2016. These targets will be delivered by focusing on the four outcome areas namely: Business Environment (BE); Access to Markets (A2M); Access to Finance (A2F); and Productivity and Efficiency (P&E); and intensifying coordination and monitoring of programs and projects among national agencies, local government units, the academe and other stakeholders/enablers from the government and private sectors.

The MSMED Plan 2011 – 2016 Midterm Update prepared in the last quarter of 2013 states that for the MSME sector to generate at least 2 million employment by 2016, it should ensure that the MSME sector is globally competitive, innovative and dynamic with strong forward and backward linkages. It was approved by the MSMED Council chaired by the DTI Secretary during its 12th meeting on 6 August 2014. Likewise, the Office of the President interposed no objection to the implementation of the MSMED Plan 2011 - 2016, along with changes incorporated as contained in the Midterm Update.

Employment generated since the MSMED Plan implementation from 2011 to 2015 is 2.6M or 130% of the 2 million employment target. This means that overall, the MSMED Plan 2011 – 2016 is on track in achieving its employment target.

The BSMED consolidates the submission of accomplishment reports from the DTI Regional Offices and National Government Agencies that implements programs/projects under the SMED Plan.

Programs and Accomplishments

Shared Service Facilities (SSF)

The Shared Service Facilities (SSF) Project is one of the government's strategies to achieve its goal of inclusive growth and jobs generation. Specifically, SSF is aimed at increasing the productivity and improving the competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the priority clusters by providing them with machinery, equipment, tools, systems, accessories and other auxiliary items in a shared system. SSFs are managed by a cooperator for the common use of target MSME beneficiaries engaged in priority industry clusters. The cooperator may be an LGU, people's organizations, cooperatives, industry/trade/business associations, LGUs, state universities/colleges.

- As of 31 December 2015 the DTI-Regional and Provincial offices have established 1,681 SSFs with project costs amounting to PHP765,720,844.34.

NEGOSYO CENTER

Republic Act 10644, or the Go Negosyo Act, provides that Negosyo Centers shall be established in all provinces, cities and municipalities to promote "ease of doing business and facilitate access to services for MSMEs within its jurisdiction." Each Negosyo Center assists entrepreneurs with their businesses through business name registration, business matching, information and advocacy, providing training and information campaigns, among others.

As of December 2015, a total of 149 Negosyo Centers have been launched nationwide, of which 5 were launched in 2014. A total 72,488 clients availed the services of the Negosyo Centers.

SME Roving Academy (SMERA)

SME Roving Academy is a continuous learning and management training program for entrepreneurs to help them better set up and step up their operations and improve their competitiveness, thereby facilitating easier access to domestic and international markets. In boosting and intensifying efforts to help MSMEs, the Department formed partnerships with the private sector, local government units, and academe to ensure the effective implementation of SMERA Program nationwide.

- From 2013 to December 2015, a total of 4, 599 training runs were conducted. These were participated in by 201,831 prospective and existing MSMEs.
- In 2015 alone, 2,535 training runs were conducted and a total of 99,249 prospective and existing MSMEs participated.

Bottom - Up Budgeting (BuB)

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is identified as one of the participating agencies in the implementation of Bottom-Up Budgeting (BuB), a program that seeks to increase citizens' access to local service delivery through a demand-driven budget planning process and to strengthen government's local public service provision. It is in pursuit of attaining the Philippine Development Plan's goal of inclusive growth and poverty reduction, and promoting good governance at the local level.

Priority projects are identified jointly by communities and their local governments from a menu of programs which consists of the following:

- 1) **Yaman Pinoy** – capability and livelihood program designed to promote entrepreneurial mindset among vulnerable sectors of the society.
- 2) **Shared Service Facilities** – common service facilities or production centers that give MSMEs access to cutting-edge technology and equipment.
- 3) **Support to SSF** – provide operational support to the

maintenance of common service facilities/production centers.

- 4) **Local Regional Economic Development (LRED)** – to promote the emergence of vibrant and ecologically sustainable local and regional economies which will trigger better living conditions of the people.
 - 5) **Rural Microenterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP)** – aims to help entrepreneurs and rural families by providing technical and financial support for micro-enterprises.
 - 6) **OTOP Store Express** – a secondary type of OTOP Store in the municipality to promote local products, deployed in high traffic areas.
 - 7) **Industry Clustering Development Program** – key strategy to MSME Development
 - 8) **Price Mapping and Monitoring** – Effort of LGU and locality to assist DTI in monitoring prices of basic and prime commodities. It aims to establish database to determine price trends, supply and distribution chain.
 - 9) **Green Growth** – Effort of LGU and DTI to promote competitiveness of local MSMEs by adopting green practices such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, climate risk mitigation and adaptation, etc.
- DTI ranked fourth (4th) from among the government agencies, in terms of projects implemented (completed and on-going), that participated from 2013 – 2015. A total of 1,521 projects have been implemented.

Promotion of Green Economic Development (PROGED)

ProGED enhances the competitiveness of MSMEs' strategies to prevent costly environmental degradation, climate change impact, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable use of natural resources.

ProGED implements environment-friendly, climate-smart, and inclusive strategies and measures for MSMEs, as well as for government institutions that are relevant to economic development.

This initiative is a four-year partnership between the DTI-Regional Operations Group and the Deutsche

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit or GIZ GmbH. The implementation started in January 2013 and will end in December 2016.

The pilot year of implementation in 2013 covered the provinces of Cebu and Bohol in Central Visayas with focus on the sector and subsectors of tourism. Consequently, fourteen additional areas were also covered (Pampanga, Tarlac, Laguna, Cavite, Palawan, Occidental Mindoro, Albay, Camarines Sur, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Agusan Del Norte and Surigao Del Norte).

National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (NICCEP)

Industry clustering enhances industry competitiveness, develops and expands exports, generates investments, and creates jobs. An industry cluster is a group of competing, collaborating, and interdependent businesses within a value chain that has been recognized as an effective approach in industrial development and promotion of small and medium enterprises as it encourages competitiveness. Industry clustering and value chain development approach is a key strategy to MSME development.

One of the strategies in industry cluster development is capacity enhancement. The National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project or NICCEP is a joint project of DTI and the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). NICCEP's overall goal is to facilitate increase in the contribution of the selected priority industry clusters to the national economy particularly in terms of creation of jobs, development and strengthening of SMEs, increase in value-adding, improvement in the business environment, more importantly impact on poverty. Its objective is to enhance the capacity of selected industry clusters throughout the country and improve competitiveness. JICA's intervention included dispatch of experts, counterpart trainings in Japan, training, workshops, monitoring and local activities of target clusters.

The DTI Regional Operations Group (ROG) is taking a proactive role in adopting and sustaining the Industry Clustering, it being an enshrined strategy for small and medium enterprise development in specific (sub) sectors in the Philippine Development Plan 2011 to 2016. The said strategy is leveraging on the value chain model to support the dominant and emerging industries/subsectors that demonstrate market and income potential. As a result of various initiatives and interventions in promoting and

fostering for industry development nationwide, the seven (7) national priority industry clusters (wearables and home styles, processed fruits and nuts, coffee, cacao, coco coir, rubber and bamboo) which are predominantly agri-based industries contributed significant outcome in terms of bottom line indicators.

- In 2015, a total of PHP 3.317 B investments and PHP 4.532 B domestic sales were generated from the 7 national priority industry clusters. The program has supported the creation of **67,110 jobs** and assisted around **13,573 MSMEs** nationwide. A total of **1,228 trainings** were conducted with **26,422 trained beneficiaries**.

Rural Micro Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP)

Rural Micro Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP) is a seven-year (2007-2013) International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-assisted program which aimed to reduce rural poverty through increased economic development, job creation, and better incomes for the poor rural households by promoting profitable and sustainable micro enterprises (MEs). RuMEPP was conceptualized as a poverty-alleviation intervention in support of Philippine Government's poverty alleviation strategy specified in the Medium-Term Development Plan 2004-2010. RuMEPP was implemented in the five poorest regions of the country that covers twenty-six (26) provinces of which 19 were classified as poorest (with poverty incidence greater than the national average): CAR (Abra, Ifugao, Kalinga); Region V (Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, Sorsogon); Region VIII (Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Western Samar); Region XII (Sarangani, South Cotabato); and Region XIII (Agusan Del Norte, Agusan Del Sur, Surigao Del Norte, Surigao Del Sur). The Microfinance Credit and Support (MCS) component provided credit to 57,330 MEs against the project target of 35,000 MEs. Ninety-five MFIs were accredited against a project target of 75. The Micro Enterprise Promotion and Development (MEPD) component of the Program assisted 32,318 MEs against the post-mid-term review target of 15,000 target MEs.

The MCS-MEPD convergence (MEs provided with both credit and business development services) reached 14,965 out of the target 15,000 MEs.

Diskwento Caravan

“Affordability when it counts the most to those who need it best, especially under trying circumstances in the most distant places.”

There were 1,096 Diskwento Caravan runs conducted from 2011 – 2015 reaching 1,428,595 consumers, generating sales of PHP474.350 M.

The *Diskwento* Caravan Project was created in 2008 to provide consumers a broad range of merchandise to choose from at reasonable prices. “Diskwento Caravans” are also made available to calamity hit areas to offer them non-relief items at discounted prices.

Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program

DTI-CARP is committed to improve the quality of life of beneficiaries in the countryside including cooperatives and associations of farmers, landowners, women, and the youth by helping them manage MSMEs using the battle cry “Hanap Yaman sa Kanayunan.” It provides a comprehensive package of support services to stimulate agro-industrial activities in the agrarian reform communities including entrepreneurship development, technology upgrading, skills capability building, product and market development, industry development, and investment promotion.

For the last three years now, DTI-CARP and DAR have

been synchronizing their work plans and activities for the purpose of ensuring that CARP resources are put to best use. This is to complement efforts and eliminate duplication of projects and activities for the same target clients and communities. The effort has paid off for both agencies particularly in the implementation of DTI's SSF Projects and DAR's Village Level Processing Center Enhancement Project (VLPCEP) and its Agrarian Reform Community Connectivity and Economic Support Services (ARCESS) Project wherein DTI provided the processing equipment while DAR provided the buildings for the projects. Having reaped the benefits from the synchronization, both agencies have agreed to continue to find ways to improve the impact of their complementary efforts to assist the ARBs.

From July 2010 to May 2016, DTI-CARP extended trainings and seminars, market development activities (market matching, selling missions, trade fairs, promo collaterals), and product development activities benefitting around 112 thousand agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in 3,268 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in 918 agrarian reform communities (ARCs).

Within the same period, these MSMEs generated PHP14.48 billion sales and created 438,384 jobs. The table below shows the details of the said accomplishments per year.

	July to Dec 2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Jan to May 2016
MSMEs Assisted	1,604	1,696	2,311	2,004	2,661	2,925	3,268
ARBs Served	45,948	54,699	61,866	66,924	84,174	108,065	112,664
ARCs Served	730	794	799	758	827	918	804
Sales Generated	₱ 972 M	₱ 2.15 B	₱ 2.41 B	₱ 2.12 B	₱ 2.45 B	₱ 3.10 B	₱1.29 B
Jobs Created	26,380	56,137	68,498	55,723	76,667	113,543	41,436

Trade Fairs

Trade Fairs are exhibitions organized by the DTI to showcase native, well-known, and trademark Filipino products. For years, it has become an effective strategy to help MSMEs sell and promote products by bringing them close to markets. For other MSMEs, it paves a way

for market expansion by determining market potential, examining recent market trends and opportunities, evaluating competition, and initiating joint ventures. Trade fairs are also a means of promoting regional products to help boost tourism. While the usual trade fairs and exhibitions can be very costly to MSMEs, the DTI subsidized the participants by covering booth rental expenses.

Beginning 2010 until the end of 2015, a total of 25 sectoral domestic trade fairs has been organized. The 3,717 MSMEs assisted were able to generate PHP 479,776,326.99 sales.

In addition, the participation of export-ready MSMEs in 9 international fairs, covering the 6 year period with the total of 182 MSMEs generated sales of PHP 326.22M.

Negosyo Atbp

A public information drive undertaken to help alleviate poverty by encouraging the public in engaging in businesses, the Department of Trade and Industry – Regional Operations Group on January 28, 2015, together with DZRH and its affiliate stations nationwide started a business education radio program entitled “Negosyo ATBP.” to educate the public of the Department’s existing programs intended for aspiring entrepreneurs, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), exporters, sole proprietors, investors, among others.

Together with former Agham Partylist Congressman Angelo Palmones, Regional Operations Group Supervising Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya are co-hosts of the program, which is currently in its sixth season. The program basically tackles the “how-tos” and requirements of starting a business: where to get capital, what business suits an individual, and other important things that will get the listener from being a listener to being an entrepreneur.

Small and Medium Enterprise for Sustainable Employment Program (SMEDSEP)

The Small and Medium Enterprise for Sustainable Employment Program (SMEDSEP), a technical cooperation project between the Philippines and Germany, aimed to contribute to the efforts of the Philippine government to improve the competitiveness of the country. It was implemented in three phases from 2003 to 2012 in the Visayas. Its goal was to enable public and private institutions to create favorable business conditions in order to develop entrepreneurial potential and encourage competition in the Visayas. The components of the project were: simplifying business registration at the local level, local and regional economic development, business development services (BDS), and enhancing SME access to credit.

Among its accomplishments were: selected local government units (Bacolod and Ormoc) streamlined their business registration process; selected BDS providers

increased their clientele and revenues by developing and marketing products and services demanded by SMEs (IT in Cebu, and tourism in Negros Occidental); and partner banks (rural and thrift banks) increased their SME loan portfolio.

Local and Regional Economic Development

Local and Regional Economic Development or LRED is a participatory, action-oriented, and implementation process wherein both the public and private stakeholders work together to improve the local conditions that will propel economic growth and engender employment. LRED mobilizes people and makes them work together to effect change.

LRED promotes the emergence of vibrant and ecologically sustainable local or regional economies that will trigger pro-poor growth, and ultimately make living conditions better for the majority of the population.

It further complements LGU planning by providing a systematic approach for identifying economic priorities and formulating population strategies in a participatory manner.

GREAT Women 2 Project

Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women or GREAT Women 2 Project is a 6-year (2014-2020) C\$ 6 million bilateral partnership with the government of Canada. The project will continue the previous GREAT Women Project that aimed to promote and support a gender responsive enabling environment for the economic empowerment of women, particularly those working in microenterprises.

The new project will merge the efforts of various government agencies (DTI, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Agriculture, Department of Science and Technology, and the Philippine Commission on Women) and will target women microentrepreneurs in 6 industry clusters (cacao, coco coir, coffee, rubber, processed fruits and nuts, and wearables and homestyles).

Business Name Registration System

Registering business names ensures that the operating businesses are registered legally and avoids duplication of business names. The new business registration processes use state-of-the-art system wherein an applicant is issued a DTI certificate in 15 minutes or less. Business registration protects consumers with the regulated use of names in business transactions.

The total number of registrations made from 2011 to 2015 was 1,665,233. The distribution was as follows: 302,896 (2011); 318,531 (2012); 308,023 (2013); 352,851 (2014) and 382,932 (2015).

Business Permit and Licensing System (BPLS)

The BPLS streamlines processes to make business start-up easier. The system reconstructs current business permits and licensing systems of LGUs for the purpose of simplifying and making them more efficient by:

- Adopting a unified form
- Reducing the number of steps
- Reducing processing time
- Reducing the number of signatories

Of the 1516 total number of LGUs in the regions, 1,204 in 2013; 1,449 in 2014; and 1,492 in 2015 have adopted the BPLS.

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Ramdam

Inspiring Stories of Philippine MSMEs

From the sprawling urban centers, burgeoning cities, and flourishing towns across the archipelago, more and more enterprising Filipinos aspire to create and produce products and services that transform their lives bringing them a step closer to attaining economic freedom.

With innate creativity, unwavering perseverance, and unbending **determination**, these individuals and groups climbed the ladder of success helping and taking more people along as they scale greater heights.

The following pages present living, breathing **stories** that prove that **hard work** and resilience best define the Filipinos' enterprising spirit.

A showcase of DTI's accomplishments and **pride**, these narratives motivate, encourage, and inspire.

Ang gawain ng DTI ay ramdam ng bayan mula sa sentro ng pamahalaan hanggang sa pinaka-liblib na kanayunan.

And these are their stories.

Ilocandia's classic condiment and food preservative finally comes of age

That distinctive Iloko vinegar

by Norbel Dolores and Joyce Segui
Photographer: Norbel Dolores



There are only a few vinegars in the world that have become not just famous but indispensable for a particular cuisine. There are recipes that call for a specific vinegar, and because no substitution can approximate the distinctive taste, it might as well be patented.

The *sukang iloko* of northern Philippines reigns supreme not just as a condiment but more importantly, as a food preservative. Made from naturally fermented sugarcane, this Ilocano staple has a strong acidic scent and a slightly opaque color. Its unique taste complements mouth-watering delicacies such as *adobo*, *paksiw*, *longganisa* and a perfect match for the doyen of Ilokano snacks, the *empanada*.

One of the major vinegar producer and manufacturer in the province of Ilocos Norte is the Malampa Agrarian Reform Cooperative (MARC) located in Brgy. Nambaran, Bacarra, composed of farmers engaged in various agribusiness activities.

The story of the vinegar business of MARC has come a long way since it started in 2005. Before the cooperative was established, some farmer-members were already producing vinegar in limited volumes but of generally lower quality. DTI and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) saw the big

market potential of *Sukang Iloko* for the cooperative so they assisted and encouraged its members to engage in large-scale vinegar production.

MARC served as the marketing arm of the member-farmers engaged in the manufacture of vinegar which they later on named as La Torre Iloko Vinegar. The stakeholders were supported by DTI, DAR, the Department of Science and Technology, and the Department of Agriculture. To further enhance production, the government agencies provided more equipment. Though the DTI's Shared Service Facility Project (SSF) and Bottom Up Budgeting (BuB), a total of PHP 2.5 million worth of equipment were provided to MARC, which enabled the cooperative to produce better, more competitive quality.

Brand recognition came with improved packaging and labeling, creating awareness, demand, and a bigger market share not only locally but also across the region and then eventually products penetrated the Manila market.

Adopted as the One-Town One-Product of Bacarra, La Torre Iloko Vinegar presented opportunities to increase household income in a sustainable way. This helped uplift the economic condition not just of the stakeholders but the entire community of Nambaran, proving that even farmers can become competent entrepreneurs.



A women's group wants to set an example

Inspired by their hometown hero, Gregorio del Pilar's women fight on

by Benj Ponce and Joyce Segui
Photographer: Aurea Bilgera



Travelling to the historic town of Gregorio Del Pilar is a gruelling trip because to reach the town, one has to crisscross the Buaya River 13 times and traverse the rugged terrain on the slopes of Mt. Kintangog with Mt. Tirad pass in full view. The town is endowed with abundant natural resources but agricultural products are sometimes left to rot or fed to animals because farmers find it difficult to transport and sell their products.

In 2005, the local government unit of Gregorio del Pilar identified ginger as their One-Town One-Product (OTOP). To implement the OTOP Program, the DTI conducted skills training on ginger processing, provided new packaging and labelling materials, and assisted in the marketing of their products. This inspired them to expand their product offerings by processing other agricultural products abundant in the locality.

In 2011, DTI introduced the veggie noodle project by conducting basic and skills upgrading trainings and provided packaging and labelling materials for the veggie noodles and chips. The Tirad Pass Food Processors Association (TPFPA) was then organized to undertake the project.

"The veggie noodle project has changed our lives by generating additional income and employment for this women-managed association," said TPFPA President Dolores Matuque. "We participated in local fairs and in the 2013 National Food Fair at SM Megamall. Doing so opened more markets with consumers buying healthy food," she adds.

In early 2014, the TPFPA was identified as co-operator for the Shared Service Facility (SSF) for a bakery project. With only one bakery in town, and located in a far-flung barangay at that, this was a promising undertaking. On November 28, 2014, this dream was finally attained when DTI formally turned over the SSF equipment for their bakery project. To date, the association processes pan de sal three times a day, yielding about 25 kilos. It has generated 21 new employment with the various income generating projects of the association.

"But things did not stop here," said Ms. Matuque, "No matter how difficult it is to travel to our place, it will not deter us from striving to gain wider market and diversify into more product lines to become a truly successful association. We would like to set an example to our fellow women association existing in the province of Ilocos Sur."

Empowered women go for the gold standard in meat processing

Cervantes women unearth new treasures

by Aurea Bilgera and Joyce Segui

Photographer: Benz Ponce



Famous as the location of choice for General Tomoyuki Yamashita and his infamous alleged hidden treasures, the Municipality of Cervantes in the Province of Ilocos Sur is home to empowered women who are creating a Golden Buddha of their own.

These hardy group of women have grown in number under the inspired leadership of Cecilia Sawey, a resident of Cervantes, and a proponent of women empowerment. Sawey helped establish the Cervantes, Ilocos Sur Women Development Center (CISWDC) which was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 2008 with 19 members.

Cervantes is located in an upland area and is not easily accessible. Because of this, the people of Cervantes are at a disadvantage primarily because

hauling their produce to commercial trading centers is difficult and bringing in basic commodities is costly.

In October 2014, when Ms. Genoveva Paet, CISWDC President, learned that the DTI has embarked on the massive conduct of trainings under the SME Roving Academy (SMERA), she requested the conduct of basic skills training on meat processing. Her objective was for the members to get more income from their hog-raising project by processing longganisa, tocino and embutido. Processed meat has a relatively big market in Cervantes and its adjoining towns of Tadian in Mountain Province and Mankayan in Benguet because these are not readily available in these areas.

The meat processing training conducted in October 2014 provided a

new livelihood venture for the members. Since then, demand for CISWDC's processed meat products have increased dramatically, with monthly average sales of PHP35,000.

To improve productivity and meet the growing market demand, CISWDC approached DTI for tools and equipment under the Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program. With the SSF, the group established a meat processing venture located at Barangay Rosario with monthly sales now reaching up to PHP80,000. The group, with a current membership of 29 women, is in charge of marketing the members' products, supplying processed meat products to their townmates and people of adjoining towns. They also provide employment to 20 individuals who are members of the association, individually and collectively improving their quality of life.



Former domestic helper comes home to be her own boss

The empanada queen

by Lilian Difuntorum and Joyce Segui

Photographers: Lilian Difuntorum and Joyce Segui

When one is born and the heavens move a certain way, some are kissed by luck and are destined to be on top. This is the fate of Gemma Victoria, 51, owner of Victoria's Empanada, erstwhile domestic helper in Bahrain, Singapore, and Hongkong, and now her own boss.

"I wanted to put up our own business and not work as a domestic helper anymore," Gemma affirmed when asked why she decided to be an entrepreneur. It was not an easy decision to make because the future of her family was at stake. For a while it was touch and go, and then seeing her dedication and persistence, Lady Luck smiled at her.

Today, the bubbly and humble businesswoman now owns and operates a string of branches of Victoria's Empanada, a successful and well-known Ilocos Empanada Food Business based in La Union.

Her special "relationship" with Ilocos Empanada began when she was hired as an "extra" in a food booth selling Ilocos Empanada during the



Rimat ti Amianan Trade Fair in San Fernando City, La Union. It was a difficult start because she was unfamiliar with the methodologies and techniques required to turn out an authentic empanada done in the classic Ilocano style. Her knowledge increased when she worked for an Ilocos Empanada store in Laoag City as an all-around helper.

A year later, she assessed her competence, acknowledged her readiness, and with her husband who is a cook, established the Victoria's Empanada with a PHP20,000 loan.

Having perfected her craft, Victoria's Empanada became famous. Tweaking the recipe and the production process made a difference because her empanadas are known to have a distinctive, trademark flavor.

Fortunately for those with the guts to go into business, DTI provides assistance in many different ways to help ensure success. Gemma's limited background notwithstanding, she eagerly participated in local and national trade fairs.

The single outlet has expanded, with her first branch at CSI the City Mall in San Fernando, La Union. Three years later, she opened her first store at Festival Supermall in Alabang where her first national trade fair, La Union's FAIRest, was held. This was followed by a branch in Robinson's Ortigas and another one in Divisoria, for a total of five stores.

The reluctant entrepreneur is now a confident Empanada Boss with an inspiring story of resilience and determination to succeed.



Pottery transformed from the usual to the unique, an expression of love for art and zest for life

From clay to works of art: The *mannamilis* of La Union

by Joyce Segui
Photographer: Joyce Segui



The *mannamilis* of Barangay Taboc in San Juan, La Union are a rare breed. They excel in creating works of art through pottery, locally known as *damili*. The people who work in a *damili* are the *mannamilis*.

For the cosmopolitan who lived in urban jungles, the sight of clay pots, jars, stoves, and *gangis* (little clay tub) are a throwback to the genteel lifestyle of generations past. For

Dozen Baduyen however, there is more to this exquisite, fragile, and exacting handicraft.

Dozen, who hails from San Juan, La Union, left for Manila to work. Unfortunately, he had to return home to look after his ailing mother. Compelled by force of circumstance, he reluctantly took on the challenges of his mother's buy-and-sell pottery business at which he had very limited knowhow.



With a creative spark, Dozen came up with the idea of creating decorative jars such as hanging lamps, *candelabras*, oil burners and table lamps, with some of his creations painted in colorful designs. In 2005, he formally started Red Clay Pottery Craft, his very own line of contemporary pots and jars. The venture went through some rough times and financial woes, but he never thought of giving up. Dozen found his passion.

Having visited the *Rimat ti Amianan Trade Fair* organized by DTI Region 1, Dozen felt he needed to make his presence felt. Off he went to DTI La Union and sought its advice on joining trade fairs. It was in one of these trade fairs that his work got noticed, paving

the way for his products to be sold in Europe, New York, and the Middle East.

Inspired by his international exposure, Dozen put up Red Clay Pagdamilian to help boost tourism, exposing visitors to a hands-on experience in pottery making. He also helped members of **Taboc Mannamili Association** to avail of DTI's programs and services. Under the Shared Service Facility Project, the group acquired a clay mixer that accelerated material preparation from eight hours to 30 minutes.

To further hone his entrepreneurial skills and technical savvy, he participated in DTI-organized trainings and seminars for MSME development. "I have this valuable relationship with DTI, they changed my perception of what government service is all about", Dozen affirms, adding that "DTI is a working agency and their employees have the sincere desire to help entrepreneurs like me."





Milking the carabao is the key The rise of the agri-preneurs

by Joyce Segui
Photographer: Joyce Segui

For a conventional farmer like Rolly Mateo of Bantog, Asingan, Pangasinan, farming is his only way of life. Needs of a growing family stretch his resources to the limit. He can only deliver what he actually generates from the seasonal harvest coming from the small rice field he toils, which can barely sustain their needs. Subsistence farming is limited and the risks are great.

Rolly believes that more than the work in the farms, farmers like him can maximize their potentials to become agricultural entrepreneurs or agri-preneurs. He is not alone in this belief. With other farmers of kindred spirits united in the desire to provide a better life for their families, they formed Bantog Samahang Nayon Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BSNMPC).

To earn more, members of the cooperative started to harvest milk from their ever reliable best friend on the farm, the carabao (a domestic water buffalo) and immediately sold it in the neighborhood.



Determined to expand their carabao-based enterprise, the MPC sought the assistance of the DTI and Philippine Carabao Center (PCC). The PCC provided them additional imported carabaos for dairy production and DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) Project provided them with tools and equipment for dairy production and milk processing, such as milking machine, chest freezers, ice cream maker, stainless tables, stamp sealer and water purification machine, costing almost PHP1 Million.

Training and seminars were also given to enhance the entrepreneurial competence of members. Prior to the provision of SSF, they only produced

15 liters of milk a day. Due to a limited number of machines for milk preservation, most of the milk they harvested gets spoiled. With the new milking facility, they can harvest an average of 70 liters of carabao milk every day, a stunning 500 percent increase. From their usual PHP600 sales per day, the farmers now earn PHP4,000 daily. This development encouraged other farmers in their area to join the cooperative. From the original five members, the number rose to 84 members.

With spoilage now a thing of the past and with extended shelf life, market opportunities for their products also increased. Moreover, they innovated by adding flavors such as chocolate, pineapple, and strawberry to produce flavored milk. Other dairy-based product variants are also available like pastillas and ice cream. The assistance provided by the DTI and the PCC to the carabao industry created a sustainable enterprise that added more employment and income to the community.



Economic empowerment for Pangasinan womenfolk

From peddlers to entrepreneurs, a Women's Club goal

by Natalia Dalaten and Joyce Segui
Photographer: Joyce Segui

People in the town of Binmaley, Pangasinan, know that their womenfolk should not be underestimated. These women have always believed that 'this is a man's world' is debatable. But instead of arguing, the 15 women organized

themselves in 1989 into the **Binmaley Rural Improvement Club (BRIC)** and went to town to learn and earn.

At 77, Milagros Buenafe is president of BRIC, now an 85-member cooperative. The growth was neither fast nor easy. Some of the women

used to spend their days playing bingo and game cards. Most of them, until BRIC came along, were unaware of their potential as agents of change, oblivious to the prospect of economic empowerment, and unacquainted with the power of entrepreneurship.

With a basic understanding of bangus processing, Milagros began attending trainings and seminars on food processing conducted by different government agencies including DTI. She shared what she learned with BRIC members and they started to make marinated deboned bangus and smoked fish locally known as *tinapa*. These were peddled by members to their friends and neighbors.

Seeing the group's interest and the viability of their project, DTI-Pangasinan gave BRIC almost a million pesos worth of bangus processing facilities through the Shared Service Facilities Project (SSF). These were food grade stainless steel smoking house, stainless tables, double-chamber vacuum-packaging machine, 22 cubic feet chest type freezer, 51-liter capacity industrial pressure cooker, and other tools that facilitated the production.

With DTI's intervention, BRIC improved product quality and increased their monthly average production capacity from 3,000 kilos to 10,000 kilos of fresh bangus processed into an array of assorted products. Aside from the deboned and smoked bangus that was their best seller, a variety of other bangus products like bangus *relleno*, *tocino*, nuggets, *siomai*, *longganisa* and *shanghai* are now available. Because these products are vacuum packed, they have a longer shelf life and are now available in Metro Manila, Zambales, La Union, Cagayan, Baguio City, Laguna, and the Bicol Region. They are also popular as *pasalubong* especially among those going overseas.

With the provision of modern facilities and equipment, BRIC is now selling a monthly average of PHP80,000 worth of processed bangus products, almost double their PHP50,000 sales before SSF was introduced. With a steady income for members, the entire community benefits, especially now that Binmaley's BRIC Processed Bangus has become a preferred brand.



Up north where the temperature is warmer, dairy production showed great promise

The milk industry in an agrarian reform community

by Romeo S. Panopio II

Photographer: Maria Liza A. Guzman



Located in the vast arable lands of Namabalan Norte, Tuguegarao City, is the Integrated Farmers Cooperative (IFC) situated within an agrarian reform community. It registered with the Cooperative Development Authority in January 1996 with 36 founding members and an initial capital of PHP5,000.

The cooperative started its dairy operations in 2004 with a soft loan obtained from the city government for the construction of its production facility. The DTI provided technical assistance via skills training, product development, and entrepreneurship training and seminars, paving the way for the cooperative's dairy business to gradually get into shape.

In July 2013, the cooperative was awarded a milk processing facility under the Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program of DTI. The package included a milking machine, chest coolers, milk pails, and sealers. The IFC, as the cooperator is currently improving its production center to accommodate a homogenizer and ice cream maker.

As part of its assistance to the cooperative, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Philippine Carabao Center trained the member-processors in ice cream production. With the warm temperature all year long in Tuguegarao City and the presence of only a few players in the ice cream industry, the IFC seriously considered going into full-scale commercial production of ice cream.

With a smile, the officers and members of the IFC vividly remember the initial products that were produced before the establishment of the SSF - only raw milk and pastillas. After making use of the SSF equipment, its menu of products expanded with the inclusion of pasteurized milk, flavored milk, and milk candy which are now distributed in Tuguegarao City with outlets in Candice Megamart, Saint Raphael Pasalubong Center, bus terminals, restaurants, and the Tuguegarao City Airport.

The cooperative's production facility houses its office and display center for walk-in buyers from neighboring variety stores, local tourists, and travelers. With the construction of the Pasalubong Center in Tuguegarao City under the bottom-up budgeting (BuB) funds, the IFC hopes to reach more consumers and expand their market.

The IFC's dairy business rose steadily through the years. Under the assistance of the DTI and other government agencies, the cooperative's initial capital of PHP5,000.00 in 1996 has now soared to a remarkable PHP20.6 million with sales revenue of PHP1.4 million in 2015.

"Growing up on the farm, we learned discipline, hard work, and commitment," Juan F. Agabin, the IFC general manager said implying that these qualities were the farmers' contribution in helping to build the cooperative to what it has become today.

A distinctive product line and a great business foresight
**Looking back, moving forward,
 living the legacy**

by Charles Irvin P. Tagarino

Photographer: Josie P. Balisi



NM Carag Furniture and Woodcraft started as a typical backyard shop during the heydays of furniture-making in Baggao, Cagayan. Although it was her husband who started the business, his untimely demise in 1998 left his widow, Nenita M. Carag with a struggling furniture business to manage and two sons, Philip and Mark, to raise.

It was not the best time to be in the furniture business because concerns about environmental protection and the fight against illegal logging were at its peak. Wood processors were only allowed to use tops and branches of previously felled timber and the government started to clamp down on timber poachers. Due to the challenges encountered in sourcing raw materials, hundreds of small furniture



manufacturers were forced to shut down operations.

Nenita refused to see the trend as a sign that her family business is fast becoming a sunset industry and refused to consider the possibility of closing shop. She weighed her options and embarked on finding creative ideas to

make her furniture shop distinct from all the others.

The widow sought the help of DTI. She signed up for its product development services offered through the Product Development and Design Center of the Philippines (PDDCP) and developed a unique “book inspired” chest designs with antique finishing. This became the firm’s best seller and trademark product for a long time.

While NM Carag Furniture and Woodcraft continued to grow, other shops went bust. From an initial crew of five in the 90s, the firm was able to employ more than 50 during peak operations. Asset size increased more than tenfold as sales continued to soar. Raw materials were no longer a problem

because the business gradually shifted to plantation-type wood species such as Gmelina.

As an offshoot of DTI's ProDev assistance, she later joined trade fairs not only in the region but also in Metro Manila. Other than being the perennial top grosser in trade fairs, the company also garnered several awards such as Best Design and Best-Selling Prototype in past National Trade Fairs. Its designs and prototypes were also acclaimed in CITEM's FAME. To top it all, its ornately designed products became the face of

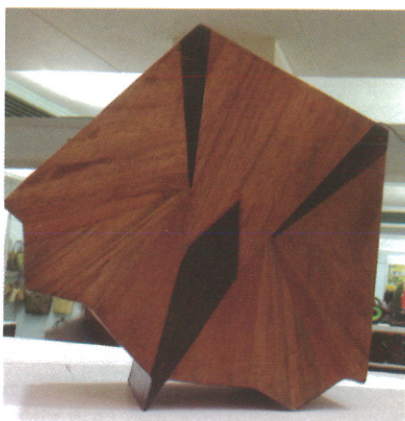
the One-Town One-Product program of the local government of Baggao, Cagayan.

Nenita ran the firm for over 20 years and with foresight, prepared a nest egg for her retirement. When she felt that her age was starting to slow her down, she decided to pass the helm to one of her sons.

Of the two siblings, Mark, who did odd jobs in the company – doing procurement, delivery and marketing – took over the business. Though reluctant at first, Mark proved to be equally

successful as his mother. In recent international exhibits such as the "Local Global Exhibition" and Manila FAME, NM Carag was one of only two firms from Cagayan that qualified to participate.

In recognition of his achievement, DTI Region 2 awarded Mark as one of its Outstanding OTOP Mantrepreneur in 2015. The torch has been passed and the son continues the tradition of good designs and execution of wooden furniture products.



There is cash in the corn husk **From waste to grace**

by Manilyn Ponce
Photographer: Madelyn B. Bulan



For others, corn husk is food for animal consumption. For the members of the Karigo Corn Husk Fashion and Accessories Association of Quirino, Isabela, it is a unique and valued raw material that brings money to their families.

The corn husk project started in 2013 through the DTI-Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program's training on basic weaving techniques utilizing corn husk, a raw material abundant in the locality.

The five-day skills training led to the creation of the association composed of farmers, housewives, and out-of-school youths. The group is registered with the Department of Labor and Employment.



Starting up, the association encountered challenges that were discouraging to the members, however, they kept the faith and capitalized in their acquired skills. The members collectively sought help and availed themselves of the various funding assistance to purchase needed materials and equipment to lay the cornerstone of the

operation. As a counterpart, the local government of Quirino, Isabela constructed a building to showcase the products of the association.

The members further honed their skills by participating in various skills and capacity building training as well as introducing their products in various DTI marketing events

such as The MANILA FAME, the National Arts and Fashion Fair, Global Exhibition Fair for the latest trends and designs, and the Regional Trade Fair. It was in these venues that their products were showcased paving the way for carving a market for the goods, widening the reach, and creating demands from both local and foreign markets.

To meet the number of orders, which came pouring in, the members encouraged members of their families to help in twining of corn husk ropes, the semi-processed materials needed to develop the products. The activity gave birth to a

livelihood among family members who are now into corn husk-twining and bag-weaving that earned them additional income.

The association slowly gained popularity in the region. Interested groups of would-be entrepreneurs from various municipalities invited Karigo's accredited skilled weavers as resource persons and trainers in the transfer of this technology.

Having marked its presence in the markets, the corn husk twiners and weavers continue to craft quality products showcasing the best of Isabela.



Small capital plus dozens of passion, ounces of determination,
and bunches of tamarind

The sweet and sour challenge

By Romeo S. Panopio II
Photographer: Ellerle Mila G. Ramel



The Darapidap Auto Savings Group, Inc. (DASG Inc.) started in 2000 as an informal DTI-assisted relending group which began with 35 members, classified as an Agrarian Reform Community (ARC), with less than PHP5,000 initial capitalization.

The founding members were mostly housewives of farmers who welcomed the opportunity to get into banana chips processing to augment the family income. Their products were sold in small sari-sari stores within the barangay and some were peddled. Unfortunately, there were too many groups and individuals engaged in the same enterprise, prompting the group to go into tamarind balls processing. DTI continued to guide the group by providing enterprise development trainings, consultancies, and product development. It also introduced new label designs and new packaging options.

In 2010, DTI encouraged and assisted the group to register their products with the Food and Drugs Administration, and helped in lobbying

the local government of Aritao in Nueva Vizcaya for the provision of a small space at the barangay hall of Darapidap to be used as a common production center.

With a minimal capital and the barest of equipment, the group struggled to keep the business afloat. In 2013, DASG Inc. was identified by DTI as one of the Shared Service Facility (SSF) beneficiaries and awarded it with cooking equipment, tools, and utensils worth PHP103,000 to increase their production capacity. DTI supplemented the SSF program with a vigorous marketing campaign that included exposure to trade fairs and leveled up business trainings through the SME Roving Academy to further develop their entrepreneurial skills.

DASG Inc. regularly participated in DTI-initiated trade fairs on a booth-sharing basis or through a consolidator, and in September 2013 gained international exposure in the 13th CAEXPO in Nanning, China.

Even with its modest market exposure, the opportunities for DASG

Inc. grew steadily, conversely increasing membership to 52.

Inspired by the growth of DASG Inc., DTI and the local government of Aritao jointly conceptualized the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Project to support the expansion of DASG Inc. and other small food processors through the establishment of a Pasalubong Center. The group is awaiting completion of a more spacious and efficient production center in a lot donated by the Aritao government.

Named as the Best Non-Government Organization by DTI Region 2 during the One-Town One-Product (OTOP) Congress in December 2013, the Darapidap Auto Savings Group Inc. was also recognized by the Department of Agrarian Reform as a gender sensitive organization in the same year.

True, the tamarind fruit can be extremely acidulous and sour but for the housewives of Darapidap, it brought nothing but sweet success.



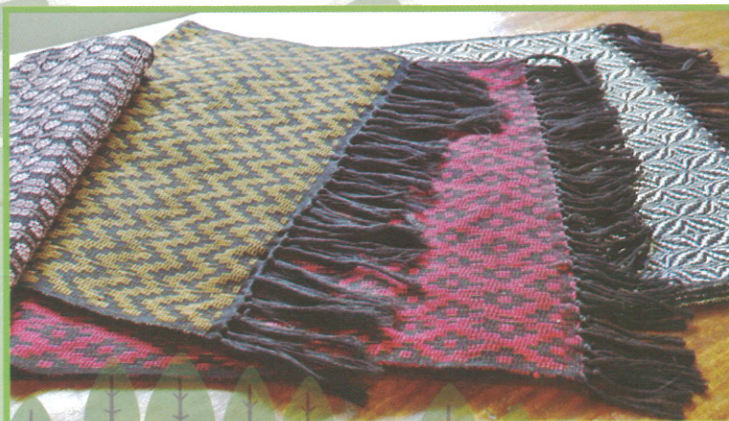
Preserving an integral part of a unique culture

The tribal women in the highlands of Kayapa

by Charles Irvin P. Tagarino
Photographer: Ellerie Mila G. Ramel

The Owag Shi (Victory Shouts) Festival of the Kayapa town in the highlands of Nueva Vizcaya showcases the living traditions of three tribal groups, the Kalanguya, Ibaloi, and the Kankaney.

Clad in their traditional, predominantly bright red costumes, the people of Kayapa dance to the rhythm of the ganza not only to welcome guests but even more significantly, to enjoin them to immerse themselves in the rich cultural traditions of Kayapa.



Their costume is in itself an integral part of their ethnic identity. Similar to the *abel*, *ikat*, and *tinalak*, the *bakjut* is a product of an age-old loom-weaving tradition that is of great significance to their cultural identity and an indispensable component of their cultural legacy.

The DTI and the Kayapa's municipal government worked in partnership with the three tribes in nurturing the *bakjut* as an emergent industry. Earlier, the DTI provided three units of loom-weaving equipment along with a sewing machine donated by a former DTI official.

Upgrading the technology involved in the production of *bakjut*, trainings were conducted to enhance the tribes' entrepreneurial competency, managerial proficiency, as well as adeptness in product development, and knack for marketing. These programs led to the



formation of a group of loom-weavers producing quality table runners, mats, and other native cloth products.

The group later formed the Kayapa Loom Weavers Association (KLWA) composed of the Kalanguya, Ibaloi, and Kankaney women. They became recipients of the SSF Project and were provided with more equipment, tools, and knowledge. The KLWA was also trained by DTI's design specialists courtesy of the Design Center of the Philippines to further enhance their loom-weaving skills.

The *bakjut* was introduced to the Asian market at the 2013 China-Asean Expo in Nanning, China. The KWLA also regularly joins trade fairs to expand their market. The *bakjut* was featured in the latest 2015 October and 2016 April editions of the Craft of Cagayan Valley under CITEM's FAME.

From a small home-grown business, the KWLA prospered into a business that caters to local buyers and to foreign clients a well. With their success, other upland municipalities in Nueva Vizcaya became interested into venturing in the loom-weaving tradition in their respective communities.

Truly, the *bakjut* loom-weaving industry is a shout of victory (Owag Shi) for the Kayapa highlands.





Measuring success by the joy expressed by satisfied customers From scrap materials to functional furnishings

by Charles Irvin P. Tagarino
Photographer: Manolet Africa



Husband and wife Guillermo and Gigi Peros are architects from Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya who love to design and create. Their passion for innovation and creativity did not escape the attention of their neighbors and friends who placed orders for customized furnishings.

As their clientele grew, they ventured into the construction business, fulfilling their desire to create jobs for their neighbors. In May 2012, the couple registered with the DTI the “Big G Builders” business enterprise.

A couple of years later, they took stock of the scrap materials, wood bits, and metal cuttings that have piled up in their warehouse and considered the cost it would entail to dispose or treat them.

The highly-imaginative Guillermo toyed with the idea of using the scrap materials in creating functional stools, quote boards, and sign boards. The idea was transformed into reality.

Looking at his creations from recycled materials, Guillermo expressed deep satisfaction and sense of accomplishment, calling them works of art.

Guillermo was invited by the Nueva Vizcaya provincial government to display his collection at the 2013 Ammungan Festival at the provincial museum. Amazed by the positive response they received, the couple opened Silya Home Furnishings which their daughter, Gariel May Peros, managed.

Recognizing the potential of their products, DTI enrolled Silya in the Artisan Village Product Development Program of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), in preparation for their participation in the Crafts of Cagayan Valley-Manila FAME in October 2015 and April 2016.

Subsequently, Silya joined the 2015 Padday na Lima Regional Trade Fair and registered with the GREAT WOMEN Project 2 of DTI to keep them updated and kept assured of



marketing prospects. They also joined the Local for Global Exhibition of the Design Center of the Philippines at Glorietta in Makati City in March 2016. Aside from the usual display and marketing of products, Silya went through a one-on-one business consultation with design specialists who provided innovative solutions to improve productivity and marketability through materials management.

Currently, Silya maintains a showroom in Little Baguio in Greenhills, San Juan that caters to an ever expanding number of clients from all over the Philippines.

For Gariel May, success is not only measured in terms of sales, she said that the smiles on her customer's faces signify recognition of their company's ability to provide joy through their works of art.

“Being differently-abled is not an excuse to depend on others for a living.”
Mapalad MPC

Living the productive and independent life

by Romy S. Panopio II
Photographer: Shiela Nera



The Mapalad Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MMPC) is a group of physically-challenged members who, with a small capital, ventured into the furniture industry, making chairs for elementary and high school students and table-and-chair sets for teachers.

The year 2005 was a banner year for Mapalad MPC. The group was granted with a project by the National Federation of Cooperatives of Persons with Disabilities (NFCPWD). From the proceeds of this project, they were able to acquire some assets including a transport vehicle and a land hosting the office and production area.

It was not always smooth sailing, though. The group suffered losses whenever a typhoon hit. There were no obligatory machinery, equipment, and tools to enable them to produce quality products. The two units of

sanding machines and a hand drill were insufficient as they had to be allowed to cool off after use otherwise they would overheat and be rendered inoperable.

Handicapped in these aspects but steadfast in the feasibility of their venture, the cooperative applied for a loan with NFCPWD to be able to sustain their operations. At some point, the cooperative considered subcontracting the services of other furniture shops in their locality to meet increasing demands. Unfortunately, subcontracting resulted to unproductive hours. Members had to wait for the subcontractors to deliver their share of the work before the group themselves could do theirs, causing delays in production and delivery.

In 2013, the MPC was identified as one of the beneficiaries of the DTI's Shared Service Facility Project (SSF) that provided the needed tools, machinery,

and equipment for production. This resulted in an exceptional increase in production, from 200 to 590 quality school desks a month.

Recently, the cooperative had a triumphant episode when the Department of Education in the region awarded them a PHP 1.1 million contract for school desks. The officers and members of Mapalad MPC celebrated the education department's full trust and confidence in the organization's ability to deliver and are motivated and inspired even more to continue manufacturing quality products.

This group of differently-abled persons was given an opportunity to help themselves and willfully rose to the challenge. Overcoming obstacles, they strived to do everything they can to live productive, independent lives.

Perseverance is a test of grit, a measure of fortitude, and a prayer on moving feet Of artificial flowers and real people

by Manilyn Ponce
Photographer: Shiela Nera



When Emilia “Emy” D. Fernandez, a civil servant, learned of the DTI training on fossilized flower-making, she made arrangements to enable her to attend. The training demonstrated how to shape flowers using dried leaves. With the arduous procedures it entailed, most of the participants opted to quit, but not Emy.

Fueled by the passion to earn additional income for her family, Emy started her fossilized flower-making business in 1998 and named it Maddela Flowers and Crafts. She reached out to five women to help her with the endeavor. During the initial phase, her products did not appeal to buyers making it difficult for her business to break into the market. But Emy was resolute and optimistic.

She diligently attended various DTI-initiated seminars and availed of financial assistance to expand her business. Slowly, Maddela Flowers and Crafts grew. The venture benefited many financially-struggling Ifugao students who work for her on a part-time basis.

With the support of the provincial government and her own hometown, Emy was able to participate in CAEXPO,

Manila FAME, and a series of national, regional and eventually, international fairs.

From a business that was built to augment her family's income, Maddela Flowers and Crafts eventually became an important component of her community. It provided income opportunities to people who were not apprehensive about learning something new and persevering in the face of challenges.

Today, Emy does not only reap the fruits of her sacrifices but also inspires others who dream to build their own businesses in the future. The secret of her success, Emy said, is putting God at the center of everything and taking on problems as challenges. Through this business, she was able to send her children to school and provide working students a leg up. Her joy lies in touching other people's lives by giving them opportunities to improve their lot.

“God gave me more than I prayed for. Through perseverance and faith in God I was able to make a difference in people's lives,” Emy said, recognizing that helping others is a big factor in her success.

Earning millions from coconut waste

Coco Coir: A story entwined in hope

by Warren Patrick T. Serrano and Aldrin Veneracion
 Photographer: Brian Sardea



When Jayson G. Simon thought about the opportunities of coconut fiber way back in 1997, he never saw himself as the main actor in bringing these opportunities to his community. Back then, there were already initial ventures into the coco fiber business in Aurora, a province that produces 350 million coconuts a year.

In 2008, the Department of Science and Technology provided a micro decorticating machine for Jason's group in Maria Aurora. This project which is full of potential was never fully productive. In 2009, his group contacted a buyer of coconut fiber. They had to use their small decorticating machine that relied heavily on manual labor and did not produce the kind and quality of coco coir that buyers wanted.

Jayson and his group organized the Aurora Agri-Ventures Producers Cooperative (AAVPC) registered with

Cooperative Development Authority in March 2012. They heard that St. Francis Multi-Purpose Cooperative from Baler was the intended beneficiary of a decorticating machine under the Shared Service Facility (SSF) project of DTI. But as fate would have it, the other group withdrew and AAVPC was now the cooperator for the upcoming SSF project.

While waiting for the SSF delivery, the cooperative bought raw materials from a local decorticating plant and distributed these to trained workers. The end product was sold, earning PHP270,000 in four months. However, some raw materials were damaged or spoiled and production became challenging. Operations stopped as members found the venture were no longer financially viable. In addition, most of the equipment delivered did not meet the desired production quality and volume.

Markets opened as the SSF was completed, among them the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and Department of Public Works and Highways which use Geo Nets for erosion control and other projects.

The cooperative buys wasted coconut's husk at 20 centavos a piece as additional income for Aurora coconut planters. Out of this, the cooperative earned PHP500,000 in 2015.

At present, the Aurora Agri-Ventures Producers Cooperative employs six plant workers and 80 twiners-weavers. The cooperative has initial arrangements with the DPWH Aurora Engineering District to provide Soil Erosion Control Technology areas along the Nueva Ecija-Maria Aurora road worth PHP5 Million. On the other hand, the NIA intends to buy PHP25 Million worth of Geo Nets for 2016 alone.



Opportunity knocks not once but twice for this enterprising duo

Young couple bags a secure future

by Nora M. Reclosado and Warren Patrick T. Serrano

Photographer: Warren Patrick T. Serrano

When the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ) in Mariveles was about to close in the late 1990s, thousands of workers found themselves in a pickle. Among them were Jane Gasoso and Disocoro “Jun” Manansala. Barely finishing high school and marrying at a young age, this couple, with three young children, was in a Catch 22 situation.

In 1996 the Manansalas ventured in garments manufacturing with PHP11,000. Jane bought a sewing machine and started making short pants. The resourceful young mother bought discarded raw materials from nearby garment manufacturers. Thread was free and abundant as factories threw away their excess or rejected threads that Jun gathered.

A year into their business, a client ordered bags and so they hired expert sewers and concentrated on bag making. Jun left BEPZ and handled deliveries, maintained the machines, and trimmed and cut for their brand, Orient Sports Gear. The DTI invited him to participate in trade fairs and other trade exhibits.

In 2006, Jane joined 29 former BEPZ workers in organizing the Mariveles Bag Makers Multipurpose Cooperative (MBMPC), which offered several advantages: loans from government institutions such as Land Bank of the Philippines, acquisition of raw materials in bulk for reselling to members, seminars on various topics, equipment and machineries, and registration of their trade name with the Intellectual Property Office. The cooperative’s membership has now grown to 524 with assets of PHP25 million from their initial contribution of PHP1,500 per member. With the business, the cooperative’s operations are now housed in a four-storey building with 17 full time personnel.

The Manansalas on the other hand employs 12 sewers and one helper, with others pitching in during peak season. They acquired 12 high-speed sewing machines, 2 double needles, and a cutting machine. Their company produces 2,500 to 3,000 bags monthly.



In November 2014, Todd Inouye, a businessman from Canada inquired about local bag manufacturers. He was referred to DTI Bataan for market matching. A visit to Orient Sports Gear in Mariveles was arranged, and orders were placed. In three months, 4,000 bags were exported to Canada amounting to PHP4.5 Million.

Today, Jane and Jun are not resting on their laurels. They are completing the delivery of 8,000 pieces for a bookstore chain even as they negotiate with a buyer from Australia.

The couple advises potential entrepreneurs to be patient and thrifty, and maintain the trust of customers by fulfilling commitments.

Doormats, you say? This can change your perspective

Finding alternative livelihood from textile waste

by Warren Patrick T. Serrano and Anne Faye S. Tungol
 Photographer: Fay Anne T. Lejarde



When the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC) transferred its management of the North Luzon Expressway to the Manila North Tollway Corporation in 2005, many PNCC workers from San Ildefonso, Bulacan lost their jobs. Most of them returned to their homes as plain housewives.

Milagros Villafuerte was one of them, a Kapampangan who raised her family in Bulacan. In 2008, she helped organized her fellow housewives to develop an alternative livelihood – from trash.

During those times, garments, and bag manufacturers in Bustos and Angat just threw away their excess textile or retazo which Milagros and her group used to produce doormats.

One of the first challenges that Mila saw was how to organize her fellow doormat makers. In April 2013, they organized the six-member San Ildefonso Doormat Makers Association,

Incorporated (SIDMAI) and registered it with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

With membership growing to 27 and too few sewing tools, the members had to alternately use two second-hand sewing machines worth PHP8,000 each and make do with raw materials worth PHP4,000. They produced rags and doormats which were sold in nearby barangays and towns. Unfortunately, liquidity was a problem because some of their buyers pay only after a month from delivery date. Notwithstanding these initial hiccups, the doormat makers sought possible ways to expand production.

DTIs Shared Service Facilities (SSF) was one of the main solutions to the challenges faced by SIDMAI. As a co-operator/beneficiary of the SSF project, they were provided with six units of Straight Stitch Sewing Machines, and one unit of Round Knife Cutting Machine in October 2015.

DTI also provided other assistance including seminar on waste minimization in manufacturing process, financing forum, and visual merchandising, as well as market promotion through trade fair participation in the “Bulacan Singkaban Festival,” “Bulacan Food Fair and Exhibition,” and “Likha ng Central Luzon Regional Trade Fair.”

Nowadays, SIDMAI has a total capital of PHP250,000 excluding the SSF from the initial capital of PHP20,000 in 2008. They have firmed-up their position in catering to large purchase orders and negotiating with big clients like SM branches. As of April 2016, the production volume increased by 86 percent from 19,500 to 36,333 pieces per month. This resulted to a sales increase from around PHP292,500 to an average of PHP500,00 per month, or an increase of 70 percent. So yes, there is money in making doormats!



The industry that carries with it the experience, expertise, techniques, and trade secrets to the new generation

The real Tsinelas Story of Gapan

by Warren Patrick T. Serrano
Photographer: Paz Tinio

The slipper-making industry of Gapan, Nueva Ecija has been handed down from one generation to another, a line of progression that initially began in Gapan in the 1930s.

Rolando Pascual, a third-generation slipper-maker, missed the opportunity to fully enjoy his childhood. While he was busy helping his parents with their livelihood, other children were playing along the banks of the Peñaranda river.

"This is my source of livelihood, my way of providing for my family as my parents provided for us and their parents provided for them," states Rolando, who adds, "I need to persevere, continue the tradition, and make it better."

Rolando is a member of City of Gapan Footwear Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CGFMPC) in Mangino, Gapan, Nueva Ecija. Formed by traditional tsinelas makers in 2001 with 28 initial members, the group now has 35 active members. The coop is a recipient of the regional One-Town One-Product small and medium enterprise award from DTI.

"The blossoming of our shoe industry began when we conducted a Lakbay-Aral (travel and learn) in Marikina in 2014," recounts Rolando. "We saw that they had more modern shoemaking machines. It was then that we realized that we can also do it."

Launched by DTI in February 2014, the Shared Service Facilities (SSF) project includes swing beam arm press, cutting

knives, stitching machines, zigzag machine, hydraulic press, insole and upper folding binding machine, band saw machine, stamping machine, and air compressor. These new equipment are thought to be more modern than the many equipment used by footwear makers in Liliw in Laguna and Marikina in Manila, and enabled CGFMPC to increase their production volume from 450,000 to 600,000 pairs per year, registering an increase in sales from PHP67 to 90 million per year, benefitting 450 footwear makers and 60 indirect workers in the area.

From slippers, their product line now includes two other types of footwear, which they dubbed as the 3S for sandals, slippers, and stilettos. Their product was modeled and exhibited at the Toronto Fashion Week in Canada through Shoeponic, an online marketing company that has a marketing relationship with CGFMPC. They have also expanded their traditional market of Divisoria and Baclaran buyers to purchase orders from famous local and international footwear brands and sellers like Fila, Polaris, and Boardwalk.

For Rolando, who was forced into an industry by accident of birth, it was not necessarily a bad thing because it was his forebears who gifted him with the experience, expertise, protected techniques, and production secrets that greatly contributed to his success and the generations to come.



A livelihood for the rebel returnees

From bullets to mushrooms, a social metamorphosis

by Warren Patrick T. Serrano and Dennis Suyayen
 Photographers: Warren Patrick T. Serrano and Dennis Suyayen

A hotbed of insurgency in the early 2000s, the quiet and remote village of Parista in Lupao, Nueva Ecija had witnessed armed clashes between the military and rebels.

But the community's determination was stronger than the trauma of war, and the problem of the community was poverty rather than ideology. The government deployed the military in the area to help the people rise above poverty which it believed is the root cause of insurgency.

In 2006, a livelihood project was initiated for the rebel returnees and sympathizers with the assistance of Nueva Ecija Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NECCI) and DTI. In the following year, the Parista Barangay Defense System Development Association (PBDSDA) was organized and later converted into a cooperative in April. The 400-member group elected Roberto P. Gaid as its president.

Their NECCI-funded the coop with PHP75,000 for a mushroom production project. The members trained at the Center for Tropical Mushroom Research and Development at Central Luzon State University to acquire updated knowledge, skills and technologies. The group started producing their own spawn, fruiting bags, and fresh mushrooms. Another PHP190,000 grant from the Department of Labor and Employment enabled them to upgrade their facilities. As a result, production increased by 200 percent.

PBDSDA earned a Certificate of Good Standing from the Cooperative Development Authority and inspired the Mayor of Lupao to change the town's One-Town One-Product from yellow corn to mushroom production. The coop also won as the "Rising Star SME" (Micro-Small category) for the province during the first Star SME awarding and recognition

The DTI in partnership with the Department of Agrarian Reform's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program also approved PHP100,000 for the development of more products. Further, the coop was also chosen by the Department of Labor and Employment to benefit from its Integrated Livelihood project towards Community Enterprise Development for Nueva Ecija, releasing an amount of PHP500,000 for upgrading of production facilities and marketing activities. Another DTI initiative was the construction of an incubation and processing center.

The cooperative now produces fresh mushrooms and mushroom fruiting bags. The daily average harvest is 15-40 kilograms of fresh mushrooms. Some of the processed products include mushroom sisig, tempura, lumpia, burger, crackers, noodles, and ice cream. These products are now showcased in local and regional trade fairs.

Today, most members rely on mushroom production as their main source of income. Workers' average monthly income is up to PHP9,500. Seven cooperative members have their own growing huts, earning them PHP3,000 to 5,000 in additional income.

Looking back, Gaid reflects that one of the reasons for the turmoil in the area was the absence of government help. With government projects now sprouting like mushrooms in the area, he hopes that the Parista mushroom project will serve as a benchmark and model for livelihood projects in the countryside. He aptly summarizes his experience, "Guns and bullets do not solve insurgency. In our case, mushroom-growing does."

The land where carabaos do not plow

Milking money in these farms

by Warren Patrick T. Serrano and Richard V. Simangan
Photographer: Malou Santos



Melchor Correa proudly says that his hand has never been better. When asked to speak before a crowd before, he could not hold the microphone well because of hand tremors and spasm.

“My hands were trembling because they were tired,” explains Melchor. “With the milking machine, the work is now faster, production increased, the quality of the milk is better, and I can still do other chores.”

The Eastern Multi-Purpose Cooperative (EMPC) which Melchor chairs, operates from Barangay Sibut in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. The cooperative was initially into financing, providing loans to its 60 members. However their loans venture did not prosper due to mismanagement. Despite of this, seven of the 60 members revived the cooperative and, in 2000, shifted their venture by participating in the “Gatasang Kalabaw” program introduced

by the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) located at the nearby Central Luzon State University. The PCC provided the group with 25 carabaos, not for its traditional use for plowing the farms but for milk production.

When the DTI provided the group with two upright chillers, two vacuum sealers, two milking machines and two milk containers in July 2013 under the agency's Shared Service Facilities (SSF) program, EMPC improved its readiness to compete with 54 other dairy cooperatives in the province.

The impact of their persistence, combined with the availability of upgraded production facilities, was a significant factor. Many of their members earned monthly incomes from PHP50,000 to 100,000 from dairy products sold through linkages provided by DTI. Correa added that a significant factor in improving their market share is the quality of the milk they produce.

With the facilities, milk production increased by 52 percent. The coop also assisted five other coops in the area by buying their raw products. In 2013, their total production was only 67,945 liters increasing to 104,514 liters in 2014 and to 134,966 in 2015. Aside from this, they also bought 78,701 liters from other cooperatives to fill the demand for processed dairy products. In 2015, their sales reached PHP12 million, a far cry from the PHP2.7 Million they sold before they had the milk production facilities. And as an icing to the cake, the EMPC also garnered the Best Dairy Cooperative Award at the national level from the PCC, twice.

For Correa and about 1,000 dairy workers in Nueva Ecija, the milk industry is a manna from heaven. The dairy producers of San Jose continue to have a productive livelihood and not from using the carabaos to plow the fields.

More than just a health fad, organically-grown food is fast becoming a lifestyle with more and more people becoming all the more discerning

Going organic

by Joseph Pineda and Warren Patrick T. Serrano
Photographer: Emil Galang



A long, muddy road in Anon, Floridablanca, Pampanga leads to a small barn where two Aeta farmers live. The indigenous couple were busy shovelling the organic fertilizer used in the farm just as the rains came.

Maria Concepcion "Maricon" Arcega inherited the farm where the Aeta farmers stay. "They were born out of this land and had their family grew up here," she said and expressed the extent of trust and care she places on the resourcefulness and productiveness of indigenous people in farming.

Married to an engineer and a psychologist by profession, Maricon bears her father's belief that for the world to care, we have to take care of it, naturally. She considers organic farming an advocacy more than a livelihood. She observed that people nowadays prefer ready to order, ready to eat, and ready to put health at risk with preservatives.

The Florida-Lubao Organic Farmers Association (FLOFA) is headed by Maricon. Based in Floridablanca, it was registered with Securities and Exchange Commission in October 2012. The group has 92 members, some of whom are retirees and almost half are indigenous people.

FLOFA grows sweet potato, radish, peanuts, cassava, pepper, squash, legumes, beans, and organic rice. They also raise livestock such as goats, sheep, rabbits, cows, and free-range chicken for organic eggs.

Apart from DTI, the organic farmers' group was assisted by a host of agencies and organizations such as the University of the Philippines' Institute of Small Scale Industries, Japan Agriculture Exchange Council, Promoting Green Economic Development of GiZ Germany, and DTI's Shared Service Facility Project under the organic fertilizer production.

In 2012, during their first stint as exhibitor in *Likha ng Central Luzon*, one of their booths was recognized as Best Design in the Food Sector. Later, they showcased their organic food products at the Manila Pavilion. The association also supply products to TARDO Filipinas Inc., a store in Singapore. The latest foothold for the organization was establishing in January 2016 a stall at Salilungan, the *Pasalubong* Center of Pampanga, earning at least PHP60,000 in sales per week.

Recently, FLOFA was awarded as Best Provincial SSF Cooperator in Pampanga during the DTI-SSF Cooperators' Summit held in Subic Freeport in May 2016.

Looking back at how FLOFA has benefitted her fellow farmers especially her Aeta couple, Maricon pondered that working with them was indeed like bringing herself in harmony with mother nature.

A wife prepares for his OFW-husband's homecoming

Homemade peanut butter competes with named brands

by Lunabelle Sison and Warren Patrick T. Serrano
 Photographer: Lunabelle Sison



Not a few spouses of overseas Filipino workers share the sentiment that eventually their hardworking heroes abroad will go home and they have to prepare for alternative means of livelihood. Bona Briones, an entrepreneur of Capas, Tarlac remarked, “My husband will not always be as strong as he is now. We need to start a business,” as she arranged the homemade peanut butter products in a box due for delivery to the supermarkets in Tarlac.

Bona had a janitorial company when she married her engineer boyfriend in 2000. Unfortunately her capital was drained by a contractor who paid six to eight months late. Her next venture was catering but operations took a toll on her health.

Ten bottles of homemade peanut butter – these were the first products she produced after attending the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority trainings. Determined to add value to her product, she got a license from the Food and Drug Administration for Bea's Homemade Peanut Butter. She offered it to big supermarkets and stores in Tarlac City. DTI Tarlac noticed her product and visited her at her home in Capas, Tarlac.

DTI helped Bona connect with Carlos Dizon who redesigned her label and packaging. She joined Likha ng Central Luzon

Trade Fair in 2013 which led to an arrangement with an institutional buyer for a chain of supermarkets. “Joining Likha boosted my business, making my product known in Metro Manila.” Bona recalled. “We were able to have new customers, even foreigners. Likha expanded our market.” Her product penetrated big supermarkets in Tarlac and nearby provinces. She also supplied a locator in Luisita Industrial Park in Tarlac City.

As of now, her business has a full-time manpower complement of 16 to be able to produce an average of 800 bottles a day. She purchased a 300- square meter lot in Tarlac City for a bigger work space. She also leased the property next to their house to serve as another production area just to meet the increasing demand. She was able to put up a retail outlet in a big supermarket in Capas that serves as a pasalubong center with other Tarlac SME products.

Despite this success, the humble owner of Bea's still attends DTI trainings and events. For Bona and her Bea's Homemade Peanut Butter, it was DTI which put her product on the shelves of success by opening new doors of opportunities. With her business, Bona is confident that her family will be taken cared of even after her husband comes home from work abroad.

Singkamas is traditionally eaten with salt and vinegar
... until this group transformed it into unique delicacies

One turnip at a time

by Mary Ann P. Bermas and Warren Patrick T. Serrano
Photographer: Warren Patrick T. Serrano



In 2008, the Municipal Agriculture Office of San Marcelino, Zambales, helped 15 residents, mostly unemployed housewives, form an association under their Self-Employment Assistance – *Kaunlaran* Program.

Juliana Freal, a kindergarten teacher, was the head of the association. “We started with nothing, zero capital, zero knowledge about the business,” she recalls. “All we had was the willingness to transform our lives for the future of our families.”

At that time, the local government unit was pushing for *singkamas* (turnip) as its main product under the One-Town One-Product Program. The Department of Social Welfare and Development provided them PHP50,000 zero interest loan as initial working capital. DTI provided training and seminars on business planning and management. The Industrial Technology Development Institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) trained them on food processing. The local government provided a vacant space for production in the Barangay Plaza of Linasin.



Using a portable oven, the SMZ SEA-K prepared their turnip pie, a unique delicacy. Initially they used an improvised unlabelled box. Other members were assigned to promote and sell the product. Processing was done per confirmed orders only, with members not receiving compensation, only food and transportation cost.

The local government provided the group with space, gratis, at the San Marcelino Public Market, which served as both processing area and sales outlet. DOST provided an oven and dough mixer while DTI helped with packaging and labelling with nutritional facts and shelf life information.

Under the leadership of Julie Freal, the association registered with the DTI

as they expanded their product line: *singkamas* pie; pickled *singkamas*; and fresh and/or fried *singkamas lumpia*. By 2012, they included *singkamas* boat tarts and yema balls with *singkamas* bits. They hope to eventually add *singkamas* vinegar, *singkamas* wine, *singkamas* chips, candies, and biscuits.

In 2015, DTI provided them stainless working table, heavy duty gas stove, electric food sealer, mechanical slicer, electric dough mixer, and an upright chiller. The production rose from 30 to 50 boxes of *Singkamas* Pie, from 15 to 30 pieces of *Singkamas* Tart and from 20 to 100 packs of *Singkamas* Yema. In appreciation, Julie Freal promised, “Rest assured that we will continue to work hard to ensure that all the resources and efforts of the government agencies who helped us will not go to waste.”

Thanks to these women, the *singkamas*, a summer staple, is now available in many different varieties all year round.

This coffee-growing town in Cavite stands out

The rise of Café Amadeo

by Rico P. Chavez
 Photographer: Aris S. Piol



The surge of coffee shops augurs well for the burgeoning coffee industry in the country. A lot of young coffee shop patrons may be surprised to learn that a couple of centuries ago, quality Philippine coffee was in demand the world over making it the fourth largest coffee-producing country in the world. But in the last quarter of the 19th century, coffee 'rust' decimated the industry.

The Philippines is reclaiming its rightful place in the world of quality coffee blend hence, in 2001, the Provincial Rural Industry Development Committee and the government of Cavite got together to revitalize the Cavite coffee industry. Of the nine coffee growing municipalities in the province, the municipality of Amadeo stood out in terms of hectareage planted, production, and number of coffee planters. On 28 June 2002, Amadeo Development Cooperative with 15 members and PHP137,500 as initial capital. The cooperative started by selling premium green coffee beans and much later engaged in producing ground coffee.

Then, with subcontracted roasting services costing PHP12.50 per kilo, this easily spelled out a hefty PHP18,750 for

roasting 1,500 kilos of coffee beans a month. The answer to deflect large expenses came in December 2013 when it got a roasting facility from the DTI worth PHP560,000.

Not only did the machine address the roasting needs of the cooperative, it also saved the group valuable processing time by subcontracted companies. The production process is now accessible, faster, and inexpensive.

Today, 80 local farmers and three millers benefit from the project. The original 15 members have expanded to 209 active members. The cooperative used to produce 1,000 to 1,500 kilos to produce 3,000 to 3,500 kilos a month. In 2012, it grossed PHP9.6 million and netted PHP649,113 income improving further in 2014 with PHP14.5 million gross and PHP2.2 million net income.

As an enterprise, Café Amadeo has been growing with total assets of PHP8.7 million as of December 2014. With aggressive promotion, diversification, and value proposition as marketing strategies, it is not farfetched that it could become a medium scale enterprise by 2016.



“Experience beauty in bran” The Oryspa Story

by Mary An R. Mada



Who would have thought that *darak* or rice bran that is commonly fed to pigs or thrown away could be turned into beauty products and be a profitable business venture? A woman entrepreneur from Laguna province has this story.

Ms. Sherill R. Quintana started selling candles and beauty products over a decade ago when there were only few players in the industry. Her maiden products were displayed at the Barakalan 2001, a DTI IV-A organized trade fair, the venue where she linked with her contacts and buyers. Her first direct export opportunity came in 2002 where her products were sold from the shelves of Macy's in New York. In 2007, she put up her own stall in a mall in Laguna and named it *Kutitap*. But like most local entrepreneurs, Ms. Quintana faced challenges when her products had to compete with those from China. She then started losing major clients locally and abroad.

But instead of giving up, Ms. Quintana went deep into research on how to improve her products embarking into product development with the help of DTI and the Department of Science and Technology, until she stumbled onto *darak*. In 2011, she renamed her business to “*Oryspa Spa Solutions*,”

the first in the country to provide spa products in the wellness sector made out of rice bran oil. The Oryspa business has a wide range of products including massage oil, soap, shampoo, lotion, perfume, soothing balms, and body scrub.

In a period of four years, the business grew from toll manufacturing to a franchising company that today has over 20 branches across the country with two outlets in Singapore.

With her success, she gained recognitions from different local and international organizations such as **Most Promising Filipino Franchise of Franchise Excellence Awards 2015**; Philippine nominee for ASEAN Business Awards for two categories: ASEAN Women Entrepreneur award and ASEAN Priority Integration Sectors Excellence Awards for Healthcare 2015; Outstanding Young Entrepreneur 2015 in South Luzon awarded by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI); and, one of the Go Negosyo Inspiring Filipina Entrepreneur of Go Negosyo Filipina Summit 2016. She is also a motivational speaker for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC, Go Negosyo, PCCI and DTI. Currently, Ms. Quintana is working on her book about her entrepreneurship journey to inspire more Filipino women to venture into business.

Lopez, Sampaloc, and Tiaong in Quezon Province

Where the small towns thrive

by Jennifer E. Ilagan

Photographers: Jennifer E. Ilagan and Enrico V. Oliveros



Small towns usually have challenges of making themselves economically viable. Often, they are left out in the development of the whole province. Then came the government-initiated LRED, a holistic approach to development. This is the process wherein the public and private stakeholders in a locality jointly agree to improve the local conditions through a number of changes.

Lopez, Sampaloc, and Tiaong in Quezon were municipalities that accepted the challenge of economic change. LRED was instrumental in providing the framework for development. Through mutual consultation and agreement, the locals identified the problems – it could be red tape at the munisipyo, stagnant economy, and low employment – and came up with an action plan to address the burning issues.

The three towns, through LRED, were given new directions, and collective efforts were activated to address economic issues and narrow the development gaps. Things began to happen to the better.

In Lopez, the number of days for the business name registration process was reduced and streamlined substantially. The Lopez Trade and Investments Promotion Center and the Lopez One-Town One-Product processing center were established providing bigger opportunities and additional sources of income especially for women. Businesses were coming out of stupor enlivening the economy and as a result of all these, there was an increase in the household accommodations.

In Sampaloc, the usually lackadaisical *Bulihan Festival* was institutionalized thereby assuring visitors to come yearly. The *buri* processing

center was established giving higher income for the processors. There is also a growing public and private support in the development of the *buri* handicraft industry.

Meanwhile in Tiaong, the LRED had been instrumental in the implementation of the new tax code of Tiaong in January 2015. The opening of the coco coir development project gave income opportunities to farmers and people in the coconut industry. The local Chamber of Commerce and Industry was organized serving as partner of the local government unit in pushing economic development in the municipality.

Indeed, the LRED plays a vital role in the uplift of small towns by assisting the LGUs carry on their plans and achieve their goals.

From a trade fair booth to the gates of multinational market The humble noodle is now for export

by Enrico V. Oliveros

Photographers: Jennifer E. Ilagan and Enrico V. Oliveros



There are noodles and there are noodles. You may have tried a few of the famous and well promoted brands in the market, but somewhere along the way, the taste just is not the same as you remember.

A noodle manufacturer from Lucena City is gaining fame and fortune because her noodles are tasty, unwaxed, and consistent. The New AM Miki Factory, a noodles manufacturer, is managed and operated by Eleanor Canlas who has been producing noodles for years. The fact that she has been doing this for more than two decades speaks volumes of the quality of her products. Her noodles are so good that she makes sure these are on sale in trade fairs promoted and organized by the DTI. She has been exporting her noodles for quite some time now.

Canlas joined for the second time the International Food Exhibition or IFEX the biggest and most respected export-oriented show in the country. For six months, she prepared for this event knowing that this year's IFEX is not like any other since it served as an official parallel activity to the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting. IFEX

showcased a wide-ranging array of foods and the hottest trends in the food industry in the 21 affiliate economies of APEC, the reason why Canlas had to put in extra attention to her product.

Canlas introduced her new noodle variant, called "Aunt Gale's," which is an easy-to-cook version of pancit Lukban, a first of its kind and unwaxed like other noodles in the market. She even designed the packaging to cater to the international consumers. During the IFEX, both domestic and foreign buyers expressed deep interest in her noodles because of its potential. A big multinational company is negotiating to carry her product. Aunt Galles pancit Lukban is currently her best seller locally. She has already sold PHP300,000 worth at PHP15 apiece. And to supplement her noodle, Canlas has come up with soya based condiment called Eleonor's Soy Seasoning which is under market testing. Indeed, this humble noodle manufactured in Lucena City has come a long way from its small space in a trade fair booth to the gates of multinational market.



Extraordinary culinary ethnic fares from the country's art capital

Business and creativity mix

by Sharon F. Dioco
Photographer: Sharon F. Dioco

Angono has more than its fair share of artist and creative people. In this small, bucolic town rose the *National Artist for Music Lucio San Pedro* and *National Artist for Visual Arts Carlos "Botong" Francisco*. It is also from Angono petroglyphs are found. It therefore is no surprise that products from this particular place are way unique from other provinces.

Dubbed the art capital of the Philippines, this municipality churns out-of-the-ordinary shapes, be in art,

music, literature, food, or handicrafts, translating these into unusual forms of art. Weaving creativity, innovation, and business, Angono is famous for its indigenous foods culling ferns, snails, ducks, and shrimps from the natural environment into various ethnic fares that reflect the rich culture and tradition of Angono.

One of the restaurants-cum-art gallery that serves authentic Angono dishes is the **Balaw Balaw Restaurant** founded by Perdigon Verdigon, a prolific

artist himself. The restaurant is now managed by the **Balaw Balaw Food Corporation** and its dishes like the *balaw balaw* or fermented shimp, *ginataang kuhol*, fried *itik*, *kinilaw na puso ng saging* and many others will be brought not only to local outlets but also abroad with the assistance of the DTI.

At the onset, this food corporation became an active participant in various DTI local and national marketing events enabling it to connect with institutional and foreign buyers. Andre



Vocalan, current owner of Balaw Balaw Food Corporation says “During these marketing events, we were able to launch our products successfully. Various food companies and end-user became interested in our products.”

Their unique food selections were also featured food selections were also featured on television, radio, and print.

These marketing exposures enabled Balaw Balaw to introduce Angono ethnic foods to a wider market segment. They had also started to penetrate market niches in the traditional and healthy foods. For several years now, Balaw Balaw had been supplying the Robinson’s chain of supermarkets as well as small chains of groceries nationwide.

To optimize the viability of their product, Balaw Balaw also opened a Pasalubong Center where indigenous product from Rizal province such as processed foods, handicraft, fashion accessories, and souvenirs are sold. At the Center, micro and small enterprises from the Samahan ng mga Rizaleño sa



sektor ng Agrikultura at Pagkain display their products for sale and order.

To further improve their products, the Department of Science and Technology’s Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SET UP) stepped in to improve the production of the corporation and to reduce rejects and spoilage.

Vocalan takes pride their company’s contribution to the community and the environment by recycling wastes. Since the start of its operation in 1982, the company had been using local raw materials from Angono and nearby

towns. The Balaw Balaw is a good example of a small enterprise that has been doing great and paying forward by assisting people with disability, the youth and the women sector.

For several years now, Balaw Balaw had been supplying the Robinson’s chain of supermarkets as well as small chains of groceries nationwide. Their products are currently sold in the USA at the following chain of stores: Island Pacific, Seafood City, Manila Oriental, Shun Yin Fat, Sears Marketplace, Philam Food, and Uwajimaya-Seattle.



A coastal town reaps success from joint partnerships

Merging initiatives for development

by Sharon F. Dioco
Photographer: Sharon F. Dioco

One of the coastal municipalities of Rizal, Cardona, is the pilot local government supported under the Local and Regional Economic Development (LRED) assistance that started in 2012. According to Mayor Bernardo San Juan, Jr., "It is the determination, diligence, and unity of the people of Cardona that made LRED a success."

Making linkages work. Initially implemented in other regions. The DTI-Rizal provincial office pursued to upscale the model in the province recognizing the gains and successes of LRED implementation in other provinces and regions.

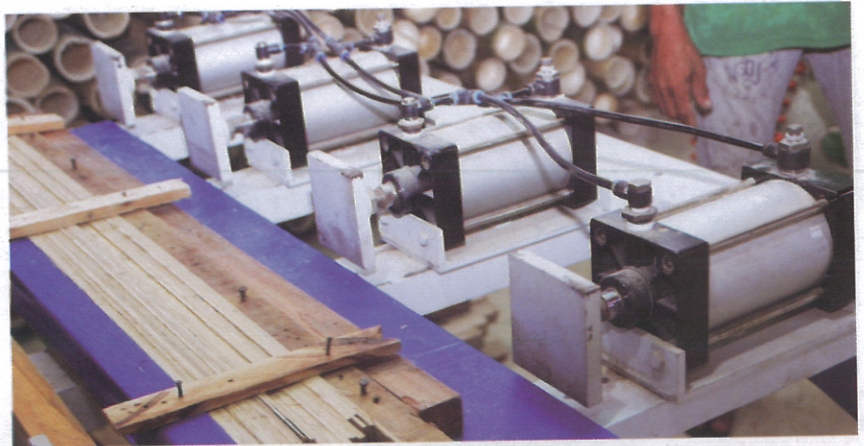
The Cardona technical working group, together with the local stakeholders, considered bamboo and water hyacinth as priority projects to be undertaken by the LGU and DTI Rizal in cooperation with partner agencies like the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Science and Technology (DOST),

Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA). A Cardona-based partner, Kakami Design, also became an active partner in both projects.

Bamboo. Bamboo became a priority industry identified during LRED activities and Bamboo Development Project utilized the Shared Service Facility of the DTI. Talim Island-based cooperatives were identified and a series of training on the preservation, treatment, and lamination of bamboo were actively participated in by people's organizations of Cardona.

In June 2014, the DTI provided the Carmona Multipurpose Cooperative with mechanized equipment to enable it to serve as the "hub" or secondary processing center to manufacture engineering bamboo products such as planks, tongue and groove, school chairs and tables, and other furniture and furnishings. With PHP3.3 million worth of equipment the cooperative





became the supplier of bamboo-based furniture and furnishing in the province.

Financial supports from line agencies propelled the enhanced operation of the different bamboo processing project. The cooperative received PHP 1 million worth of working capital from DOLE while the two nodes, Balibago and Borgan cooperatives were awarded with about PHP300 thousand worth of additional equipment under the DOST-GIA Project.

Water Hyacinth. Meanwhile, the Water Hyacinth Livelihood Project is a joint undertaking of Cardona, DOLE, DTI, and DOST funded under DOLE's integrated Livelihood Program. The program package covers the establishment of the water lily livelihood project ad set-up of common service facility. Project beneficiaries were the Looc Livelihood Association, Patunhay Livelihood Association,



and the UNBOUND-SCOPE Antipolo Project - Serve the Children and Older Persons Foundation. In support to the development and promotion of water hyacinth, a series of capability training were conducted. The training greatly benefitted housewives, fisherfolks, and out-of-school youths in Cardona.

The *Samahan ng Kababaihan ng Brgy. Patunhay Inc.*, was also assisted with an SSF. The association was provided with one unit of water hyacinth dryer worth of PHP.6 million pesos for the processing of water hyacinth stalks into semi processed raw materials used for finished products of gifts, décor, and housewares. Based on the monitoring of this project, a total of 85 gatherers and production workers were provided



income and employment opportunities.

On business enabling environment, project jointly undertaken under LRED included the review and evaluation of revised Cardona Municipal Investment and Incentive Code; and, the monitoring and evaluation of Business Permit Licensing System Project, a joint project of DILG and DTI-Rizal that streamlines business registration procedures.

DTI Stops Proliferation of Inferior Construction Materials in Typhoon-Hit Areas

by Charlie Dajao

Do you remember the multi-storey building in Binondo that crashed to the ground? Have you read about firewalls that did not serve its purpose and fell on unsuspecting passers-by? And when you buy steel bars from the local hardware, are you sure that these were not made from inferior materials?

Under the Consumer Act of the Philippines, it falls on DTI to protect consumers from unscrupulous merchants who pass on poor quality products to consumers. It may be food, service, products, furniture, materials and such that affect the health and safety of the people.

Sometime in June 2015, acting on a call from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Region IV-A, a DTI enforcement team was mobilized to back up the CIDG in serving a search warrant for steel products – angle bars and rolled bars of various sizes suspected to be uncertified or substandard – to a big time steel trader.

The joint team confiscated and recovered various steel products valued at PHP42 million confirmed uncertified by the DTI team and consequently hauled under DTI's custody.

The CIDG filed criminal cases against 11 of the perpetrators including the incorporators of said steel trading company in violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines while separate administrative charges were filed by

DTI against the steel trader.

Unsuspecting buyers are often unaware that construction materials have been fakes, deliberately diluted in terms of incorporating other materials into steel products, roofing materials, paints and others. It results to poor quality, poor construction and a short life span.

A devious scheme had been uncovered in areas that had been hit by natural disasters, and therefore wanting in construction materials. Here, heartless businessmen would channel substandard materials to people who are in dire need to rebuild their homes. After the devastating Yolanda typhoon that hit the Visayas area, it was noticed that there was a proliferation of substandard materials. Under the orders of then rehabilitation czar Panfilo Lacson, DTI Secretary Gregory Domingo conducted an investigation of materials shipped to Yolanda-hit areas.

It was confirmed that the materials were not only of poor quality but were even overpriced. It was the DTI that validated that indeed, the materials were uncertified and substandard.

A week before this happened, the CIDG also searched a warehouse in a Region IV-A province and this also yielded illegal materials worth Php40 million. Furthermore, the police confirmed that the two warehouses, earlier raided by the police, were owned by the same people.

Investing in the traditional skills of the community

Weaving revival wins

by Rio Andrea A. Angeles
Photographer: Rio Andrea A. Angeles



Sometimes unfortunate events bring out the best in people such as what happened to Julie Anne Reginio after typhoon Milenyo struck the country in 2006. It left PHP320-million damage in its wake on moderate crops that included her copra-buying business.

Devastated and clueless, Julie Anne and husband Luisito sought other means of income. Neighbors, who were also weavers, encouraged them to start a loom-weaving in her barangay.

"I have no previous knowledge on loom weaving. It was our neighbors who were experienced weavers and who encouraged us to start as they promised to help us. This is when DTI entered our lives.." Soft spoken and timid, Reginio admitted that she immediately visited DTI to seek assistance and was aided in all the necessary steps in starting a business – from business registration all the way to obtaining business permits and licenses. Since handloom weaving was the regional One-Town One-Product in Marinduque at that time, she was prioritized to get DTI consultancy services.

With a PHP200,000 capital, Reginio

was first referred to the maker of the reed for fabrication of the handlooms. Although her workers were already skilled weavers, it did not stop DTI in providing seminars and training programs such as skills training on bleaching and dyeing. Aiming for a product that could be competitive, she received business coaching and regular factory visits until the quality of the products and the production capacity was established.

Aimed at expanding the weaving industry in Marinduque, the DTI provided her business with loomweaving tools through the Shared Service Facility Program. PHP2 million worth of 20 units of handloom weaving equipment, four units of dyeing vats, and four units of warping frame were handed to three beneficiaries including Julie Anne's Handicraft. She received five weaving equipment and a unit of dyeing vat.

Export quality placemats, table runners, and window blinds were woven the traditional way using the buntal fiber coming from buri palm trees. Every fiber is dyed in various colors and painstakingly woven into intricate designs. After years of self-improvement and hard work, Julie Anne's Handicraft

became the frontrunner in handloom weaving industry in Torrijos, Marinduque.

Julie Anne became a regular participant in DTI-organized and assisted trade fairs. In 2014, Julie Anne's Handicraft was the sole entry of MIMAROPA to the 11th China-ASEAN Regional Trade Fair in China. Recently, her products were exhibited at the Brunei International Trade and Consumer Exhibition. She hit the one million-peso mark at the first quarter of 2016.

Product exposure outside the country with 42 local workers employed, Julie Anne's Handicraft has contributed not only in promoting the province of Marinduque but also to the general livelihood in the municipality of Torrijos.

"I grabbed every opportunity offered to me. Patience and hard work are the keys to success and one should not be afraid to learn because it will help you grow and develop. Always remember that there's no easy way to success," stressed Reginio as she ended her story on how a devastating typhoon turned her into a fearless and successful entrepreneur.



Keeping afloat through sheer persistence and continuous innovation

The yummy taste of success

by Rio Andrea A. Angeles

Photographer: Rio Andrea A. Angeles

Behind every success is a story of hardship, missteps, and resolute determination. Ellen Muros, just like the other flourishing entrepreneurs, started her peanut butter business with small capital and unbounded optimism.

Hailed from the island of Odiongan in the province of Romblon where peanuts are abundant, Ellen jumped into the peanut butter bandwagon when her direct selling business failed. With a huge debt to pay, it was her husband, Robert, who prodded her to join the 7 Isles Progressive Entrepreneurs Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PEMPC) a cooperative established through the help of DTI which was assisting budding micro entrepreneurs of Odiongan in product development and marketing.

The cooperative provided her raw materials in making peanut butter including packaging materials. She also used the product labels that the cooperative provided at a minimal cost.

Her first big break happened when the wife of a Romblon congressman bought her peanut butter and gave them



away as gifts to friends and colleagues. Her peanut butter must have tasted better than other brands for soon after, she got positive feedback and by word-of-mouth, she began getting bulk orders. The creamy texture and distinctive taste of Ellen's peanut butter won the hearts of many Romblomanons.

"My peanut butter went through several tests. I gave out samples to my neighbors and asked them if it tasted delicious. But I was never satisfied with a 'yes,' because I thought they just didn't want to hurt my feelings. So, I strived harder to achieve the perfect recipe for my peanut butter," Ellen revealed.

DTI endorsed Mama's Yami Deli

Foods to the Department of Science and Technology to avail of the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SET-UP) that provided the needed machinery and other equipment for her peanut butter production.

Increased demand for her product made Ellen move from her backyard to a bigger and wider place to accommodate all the machinery and four employees. Now, they distribute not only in Romblon but also in the provinces of Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, and Metro Manila.

Today, Ellen's peanut butter products come in plain, crunchy, double zero (no sugar, no salt), 100 percent coco sugar, and choco-peanut. New product lines had been introduced such as salamagi paste (pure tamarind paste), sweetened banana balls, and turmeric powder.

When asked for her formula of success, Ellen simply says, "Innovation is the name of the game." Mama's Yami Deli Foods always checks the market segment before embarking on new products.



A simple depollinating machine quadruples the income of Romblon farmers

Soft brooms sweep penury away

by Rio Andrea A. Angeles and Rocky Lee F. Moscoso

Photographer: Clinton F. Solidum

On a regular day on a steep mountain slope where tiger grass are abundant, Jose Gabon Jr. would harvest, sun dry, remove the pollens of the plant, and bring the panicles home to be made into soft brooms. Tiger grass farmers in the municipalities of San Andres and San Agustin, Romblon earn almost PHP3-million worth of brooms annually. However, these farmers encountered production problems due to a labor-intensive steps in the processing of this product. They were stumped by the depollination process.

In 2007, the DTI identified tiger grass as the main product of the municipalities of San Andres and San Agustin. This meant getting more assistance to develop brooms in the area. In 2010, the DTI co-founded a research study with the Romblon State University (RSU) which profiled different tiger grass farming communities in the two towns which later became DTI's reference to

intervene with the development of tiger grass industry in the area.

In 2013, the DTI's Shared Service Facility Program, in cooperation with RSU established a facility for tiger grass pollen remover in San Andres. A similar facility was established in San Agustin in February 2014 in cooperation with the local government. Each facility was equipped with three units of tiger grass pollen remover cum wood working machine and three units of portable garden chainsaw accompanied with accessories.

Two farmer groups benefitted from using these facilities. These are the Luway Producers and Makers Association of Naruntan with 24 beneficiaries and the Samahang Magluluway ng San Agustin, Romblon with 67 beneficiaries. The SSF in particular helped increase the production of soft brooms by easing the de-pollination process through the incorporated lathe in the equipment.

The facility almost quadrupled the income of the beneficiaries as compared to the time when they used manual depollination. Sales in 2015 was PHP6.3 million as compared to PHP1.4 million in 2014 and PHP750,000 the year before the facilities were established. Aside from the local market, the finished products are also delivered in Mindoro, Batangas, Aklan, Capiz, Iloilo, Lucena, and Metro Manila. Janitorial companies are regular customers of Romblon's soft brooms due to its quality generating 182 direct jobs and 350 indirect jobs in the municipalities.

With the DTI-provided specially designed cap seal for soft brooms, Mang Buboy, a beneficiary, would only assemble the materials into a finished product. He could now make 24 pieces of soft brooms worth PHP1,200 a day pocketing PHP400-600 daily, indeed a big help for his family.

The enterprising hog-raisers

The Bansud Cooperative success story

by Rio Andrea A. Angeles
 Photographer: Libdinia C. Fontamillas



In the southern part of Oriental Mindoro lies the Municipality of Bansud. It was once a quiet town with hog farming as the main source of the families' income. In 2000, the simple lives of Bansud townfolks were in for change when the Bansud Livestock Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BLMC) was established.

The coop was founded by Alfredo Majaba, Odelon Macalindog, Jimmy Alcala, and 15 other members. Majaba, its president, looks back on how superficial their goal was, "We just wanted to raise hogs for livelihood. That is what most of us do. We established the cooperative and used our initial capital to sell feeds (hog pellets) and medicines." He admitted that they were able to achieve their goal but also wanted to explore other productive endeavors.

With the volume of hogs raised, the coop supplied fresh meats to the public markets until they suspected that the coop was losing. "Price of feeds and medicines pumped up and our middleman from Batangas bought meats

from us in a very low price. In a short span of time, we will go bankrupt if we continue the system," narrated Majaba. Appalled by the idea of losing the business, the coop considered making processed meats.

At first the members were uncertain and determined that the plan was too risky, but in the end, optimism prevailed. The group's initial offerings were longganisa (local sausage) and tocino (cured meat) that were sold at the local markets earning positive feedback and created demand for the products. The outcome inspired the cooperative to expand its new business. "However, our manual process is too slow to meet the high demand," Majaba revealed.

It was the DTI's Shared Service Facility Program that became the impetus for the coop's productivity. The PHP1.3 million-facility upgraded BLMC's meat processing system with a potential of at least 10 percent annual sale increase. And true enough, by the last quarter of 2015, the cooperative recorded a total sales of PHP4.6 million, the highest since they started the

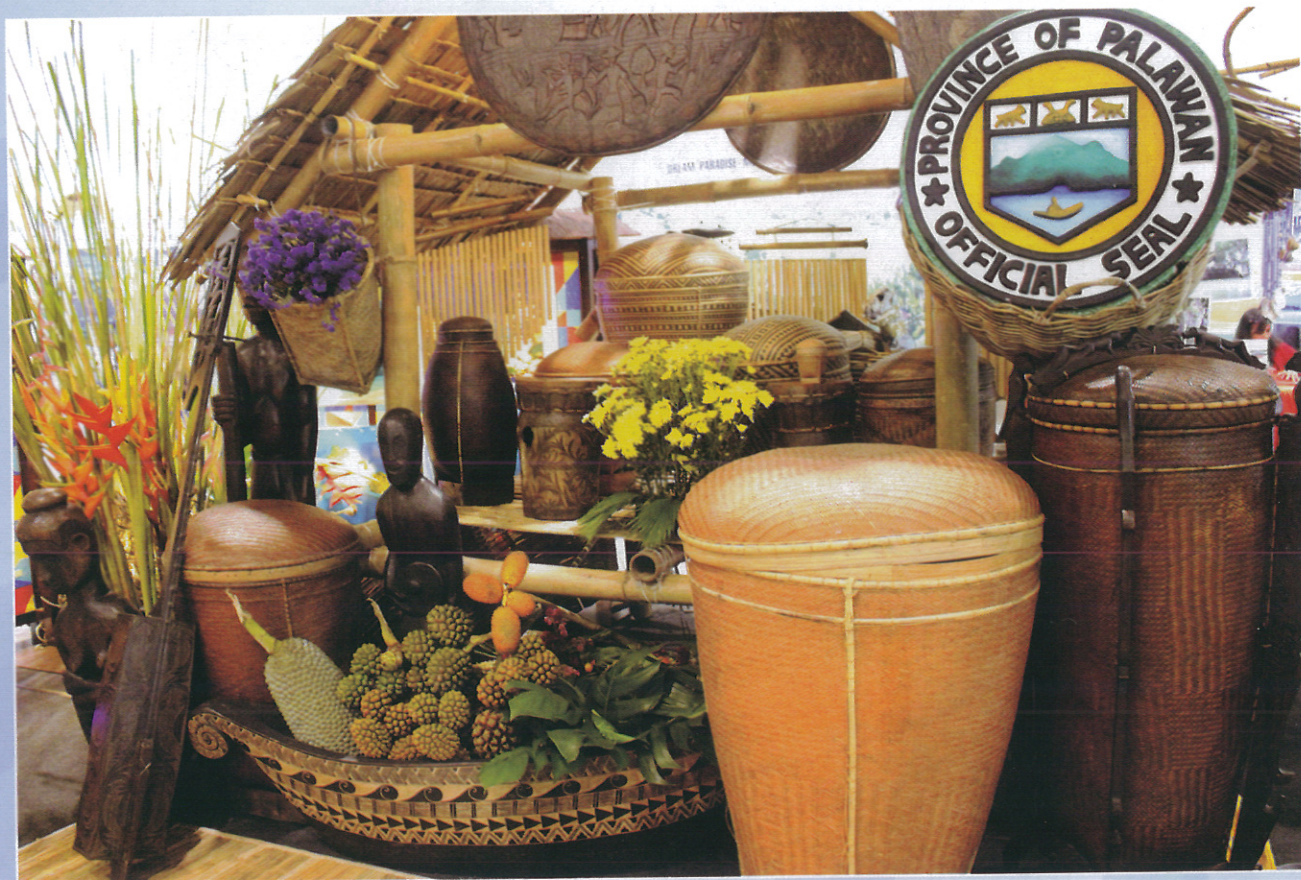
business in 2002. There was also a clear-cut increase in the production volume that was almost four times higher prior to the establishment of the upgrades. These days, the cooperative supplies products to Cavite, Laguna, Aklan, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, and parts of Metro Manila.

"It's really overwhelming that our products have become a part of the Mindoreño meals," said Macalindog when asked how they felt about the progress of their longganisa and tocino products. In addition to their growing variants of processed meats, BLMC recently introduced its own hotdog version.

With enthusiasm and pride, Majaba said that the coop grants scholarships to youths of Bansud as a way of giving back. "Sending our youths to school is our way of helping them become productive members of the community. It started with just a simple dream – to provide jobs and income to my compatriots but we received more than we asked for. DTI is a big part in achieving this success."

Expanding opportunities, gaining new and bigger markets MIMAROPA naturally: The destination of budding entrepreneurs

by Rio Andrea A. Angeles
Photographer: Rio Andrea Angeles



Trade fairs have been and always will be the best channels for entrepreneurs, whether novice or established, to showcase products and find new markets. This is the reason why DTI led the MIMAROPA naturally: Agri-Trade and Tourism Fair in 2015. The region, which is composed of five island provinces – Mindoro (Oriental and Occidental), Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan – is home to promising entrepreneurs.

The MIMAROPA Fair was the first trade fair at the regional level after Region 4 was divided into Region 4A (CALABARZON) and 4B (MIMAROPA). A collaborative effort of the DTI, DTI-Bureau of Small Medium Enterprise Development, Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Tourism (DOT), and the provincial governments, this five-day fair showcased the region's various indigenous materials made into food, fashion, functional, and creative pieces. This PHP2.2 million project benefitted 74 exhibitors including DOT-accredited tourism establishments. Through the marketing clinic, a total of 16 food-based and 14 non-food based MSMEs were provided with practical inputs and suggestions on how to improve the marketability of their products and services. A total of 125 new designs for label and packaging were distributed to the MSMEs.

Jerlie Daseco, who hails from Paluan, Occidental Mindoro and president of Paluan Food Processors Association, was a first-time participant of the trade fair. She admitted that joining a government-organized event was already a big help to the association. "It's really good to know that government agencies work hand-in-hand to help struggling entrepreneurs like us." The association sold *pastillas* (milk candy), *atchara* (pickled papaya), pure honey, and roasted cashew nuts generating PHP29,730 during the five-day trade fair. "If I only knew that our products would be a hit to Manileños, we should have brought more products," she added. Paluan Food Processors Association is also a beneficiary of the DTI's Share Service Facility project.

Another first-time exhibitor from Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro, Maria Eliza Paylago, owner of Bahaghari Global Food Incorporated, was exhilarated when she booked an order amounting to PHP2 million. Since then, Maria Eliza has been a frequent participant of local and national DTI organized trade fairs.

The trade fair was applauded as a huge success for garnering a total sales of PHP4.9 million.



Four sisters, single enterprise **Distinctive beaded bags from a quadruple force**

*by Jocelyn Berango
Photographer: Jocelyn Berango*

Four Nacion sisters, Thielle, Jocelyn, Rosemarie, and Maria Teresa of Daraga, Albay, inherited a bag production business from their parents. In 2001, they decided to put up a corporation named Prime Legacy, Inc. and proceeded to earn the distinction as one of the pioneers in crafting world-class beaded bags in the region.

The company, built by the persevering siblings, grew steadily. All very hands-on and obviously loving what they do, they discovered a passion for product design that is a decided

advantage in making their products even more competitive, especially in the export market. Their passion transformed a once simple family enterprise into a global venture.

Thanks to the Nacion sisters' enthusiasm and appetite for success, Prime Legacy's beaded bags are now available in established fashion houses in Japan, Singapore, and the United States.

DTI is responsible for providing Prime Legacy a leg up in the business, inviting it to trade fairs, exhibitions, and business



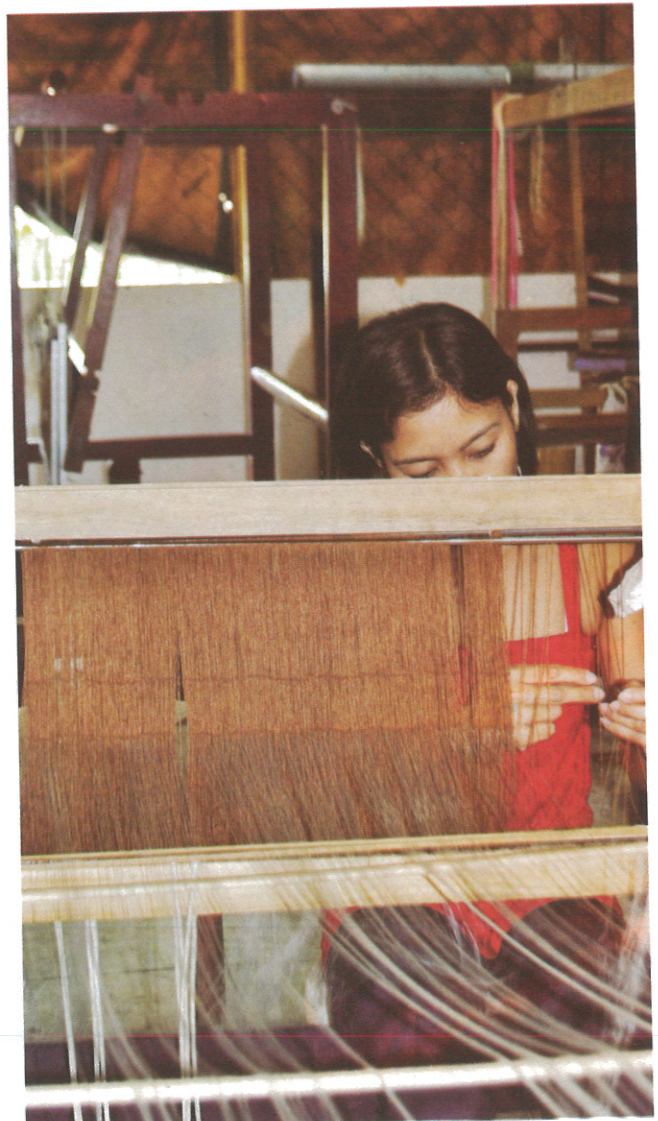
matching activities that gave the company its much-needed exposure to both domestic and international markets.

Through many different avenues, particularly training and seminars, DTI was able to instill in the owners, management, and staff of Prime Legacy, Inc. the concept of quality and that distinct touch that international buyers look for.

Initially established with a capitalization of PHP1.5 Million, the company now has an asset of PHP15 Million. The Nacion sisters' Prime Legacy, Inc. employs 264 people who believe in the company's tenets configured by years of experience: adherence to quality and willingness to continue learning new methods and techniques to carry the brand forward.

Expanding in leaps and bounds **Weavin' and growin' in Labo and beyond**

by Jocelyn Berango
Photographer: Jocelyn Berango



Since its launching in 2006, Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LPMPC) partnered with the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) in developing polypiña cloth for office uniforms for over a million government employees. To ensure a continuous supply of quality fiber, LPMPC became the big brother to small producers of machine-decorticated fiber and manually-scraped knotted fiber as buyers and consolidators, helping 12 communities with 400 from just 30 employees in 2006.

In 2009, the Republic of Spain tapped the cooperative to be the consolidator to help small producers by lending working

capital, providing additional units of decorticating machines, and buying their produce. This successful endeavor inspired project evaluators to provide another set of decorticating machines for the towns of Mercedes, Talisay, and Vinzons. The first batch of beneficiaries was given motorcycles with haulers.

The cooperative's impressive performance encouraged other agencies to provide technical and financial assistance. The coop constructed two buildings to house its weaving looms of piña cloth and tools in making handmade piña paper. The existing production area is also used for the processing of pineapple juice, vinegar, and dehydrated pineapple.

In addition, LPMPC also collaborated with the Fiber Industry Development Authority in developing a natural fabric

for an Italian Fashion House and as a big brother, partnered with a cooperative of marginalized women in Lumban, Laguna known for its fine embroidery.

Further expanding its business opportunities, the coop borrowed PHP2 Million from Land Bank of the Philippines to finance pineapple-growing ventures of its members to ensure a continuous supply of quality Formosa pineapple. The coop works with the Department of Agriculture in enhancing the competitiveness of the Queen Pineapple.

In 2009, the coop's hand-woven cloth was chosen by Runway Productions, Inc. as material for a fashion show held to celebrate the International Year of Natural Fibers 2009 at SMX Convention Center MOA in Metro Manila. Today, it currently works with the

Association of Philippine Free Trade, Inc. for the development of various products from pineapple fiber and pineapple fruit.

When the DTI's Shared Service Facility program was launched in 2013, the Labo cooperative was made one of its cooperators and awarded with a total project cost of close to PHP3M composed of 15 sets of defibering machines maintained at its main office in Malasugui, Labo. The coop experienced remarkable 70 percent rise in productivity with the DTI-provided machinery. Production of machine-decorticated fiber from fresh Formosa pineapple leaves increased from 3,120 to 5,432 kilos a year, generating sales from PHP780,000 to PHP1.4 million a year and directly benefitting 70 micro, small, and medium enterprises and 1,751 pineapple growers.





A business that grew out of a wedding kitty

A couple's sweet pili nut success

by Jocelyn Berango

Photographer: Jocelyn Berango

J Emmanuel Pastries, is a homegrown company that started its operations with the marriage of Maria Lydia Perez to Joseph Lomibao in 1997. With PHP500 left from their wedding kitty, they started making pili tarts for downtown stores in Naga City. Sales were good and orders came. A helper was hired to keep up with the series of bulk orders. But that was years ago. These days, there are about 60 people working in J. Emmanuel Pastries.

The pastry enterprise produces 30 varieties of pili nut confectioneries and supplies them to both local and international markets. The company's growth can be attributed to the persevering Lomibao couple, Lydia and Joseph, who are not only mere thinkers but also doers. Behind the success

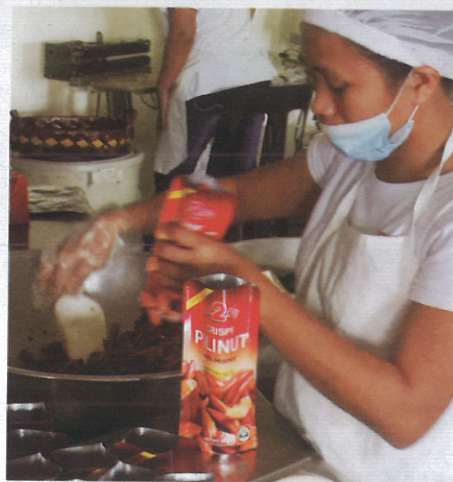


of the enterprise is the persistence to constantly improve their products. Lydia, who loves to cook, handles the marketing while Joseph focuses on production and ensures that quality will always be the trademark of their products. She's creative in developing new product lines like hopia de pili,

sweet and chili sampaloc, sesame balls honey flavored, coco jam de pili, heritage collection, suspiros de pili, pili nut revel bar, pili topped brownies, and others.

Additional investments were injected to modernize their production and packaging equipment that led to increased production and ultimately to new markets. The company strictly complied with the government regulations particularly imposed by Bureau of Food and Drugs and the required bar coding by big retail establishments.

J. Emmanuel is considered as one of the pioneers in good packaging and labeling for pili products which other pili candy producers in the region emulated by coming up with better packaging and



labeling that could compete with the growing discerning market.

With the assistance of DTI, the firm had become a regular participant in the regional, national, and international food exhibitions. Its most recent sortie abroad was in January 2013 when the company was selected to participate in the Winter Fancy Food Show at the Moscone Center, San Francisco, California, the biggest specialty food

promotional event with 1,300 exhibitors and some 20,000 guests from various countries.

The company recognizes the assistance extended by government financing institutions that paved the way for the company to be known locally and globally. The company grew from micro to a medium-sized enterprise with a PHP30 million capital. Help from the DTI, the Department of Agriculture, and the

Department of Science and Technology expanded its market, increased its employees, and added more product variations. Its products are also sold in Japan, the US, Canada, South Korea, and China.

A combination of a winning product, a producer who believes in quality service, and good governance brought out the best in J. Emmanuel Pastries.

"We love weaving. This is our heritage. This is our life."

The handloom weavers of Buhi

by Jocelyn Berango
Photographer: Jocelyn Berango



In 2013, the Buhi One-Town One-Product key players were among the first to benefit from the DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) program. In coordination with the Caceres Social Foundation, a church-based organization, the weavers became the recipients of 40 handlooms and six sewing machines.

Such a delightful sight when all handlooms and spindles are in motion. Since weaving and sewing were home-based, all household members work together to produce hinabol or handwoven textile, used as the basic material for making other products like the traditional wear. To the women of Buhi, handloom weaving is an age-old skill.

Susan Abad is a young grandmother who sold woven blankets. When she had no money to buy her daughter a school bag, she made one for her using the hinabol. When her daughter returned from class, she excitedly said that her teacher bought her bag and had ordered three more! From then on, the proud grandmother made bags out of her woven fabrics and sold these in town.

Susan is always on the lookout for new designs. Among her bestselling bags in Buhi is a knapsack that looks like a shoe that she made after he saw a bill collector came carrying a shoe-like bag. She asked the man if he could leave his bag so he can copy the design, which he did with the condition that Susan will make one for him too.

It was in March 2014 that the SSF became a very significant part of Susan's life when she unexpectedly received an order from the Department of Social Welfare and Development to deliver 1,500 pieces of seminar kits made of

hinabol fabrics. With trepidation, she accepted the challenge and upon her return home, she immediately mobilized other weavers to help her deliver the fabrics on time. Susan acknowledged that without the SSF she doubted very much if she would have risen to the challenge.

While waiting for another opportunity, she makes wallets and bags for her regular buyers. She is very thankful for the sewing machine from SSF that helped her earn more.

Julie Lavapie is a housewife who works at a neighbor's handloom to augment her income and was among the women who received a handloom under the SSF. Her heart overflowed with happiness and gratitude for this gift because, at last, she has one now right at her own home.

Upon receiving the handloom, she immediately assembled it and sat down to work and wove and wove day and night. Soon, all her family members, including her husband, have become proficient weavers and were producing more than six blankets a day.

After three months, they were able to buy another handloom and now, they have a total of four. She had to extend her house make room for all the handlooms. The five-member Lavapie family became suppliers who were able to deliver orders in bulks. The family is grateful to the DTI for giving them the opportunity to earn and be productive.

Life is busy for the handloom weavers in the quaint town of Buhi. The homes are alive with whirls and colors of the threads and fabrics, people are happy and contented, and tradition is preserved.

Shared service facility expands opportunities of fisherfolks The fish processors in Sabang, Sorsogon

by Jocelyn Berango
Photographer: Jocelyn Berango



Starting out as a pilot eco-tourism project in 1994, the Seamancor Eco Developers, Inc., in Sabang, Prieto Diaz, is a guardian to luxuriant mangroves, lush seagrass beds, and lively coral reefs in the fish sanctuary. For years, they have protected the area against illegal fishing and other harmful practices.

Soon after, it ventured into the processing of rabbitfish (local name is *bataway*, but commonly known as *danggit*) under the DTI-Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program's (CARP) skills and entrepreneurship training. Equipment such as basins, chopping boards, knives, sealer, and solar dryers used for the processing was procured. As the group became adept in deboning, they began to produce more.

An additional capital of PHP150,000 through the Department of Social Welfare and Administration's Self-Employment Assistance-Kaunlaran (SEA-K) micro-financing program enabled the group to produce more to respond to growing demand for processed *danggit*. Additional solar

dryers were bought and packaging and labeling were improved with support from DTI. Production increased from 50 to 100 kilos of dried *danggit* per month and sold at PHP550 per kilo or PHP100 for 200 grams in Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon, Albay, Manila, and Cavite.

In 2007, Seamancor's participation in Orgullo kan Bikol (OKB) Trade Fair in Megamall, Metro Manila, earned them PHP25,000 inspiring the group to produce more and improve their product to prepare for the next fairs. The following year at OKB and the Kasanggyahan Trade Fair in Sorsogon, sales rose to PHP100,000.

In 2013, Seamancor benefitted from the DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) providing them with a mechanical dryer, three units of chest-type freezer, four units of stainless working tables, two units foot-type sealer, and a table top vacuum sealer. With the SSF project, *danggit* processors were encouraged to buy all the freshly caught fish from the fisherfolks.

Danggit is abundant in the seabed of Prieto Diaz. On peak months, an

estimated 15-20 tons per month are harvested. However, due to limited processing equipment, production was not fully maximized, hence, tons of excess fresh catch were sold at the nearby towns at very low price, not to mention the additional cost to transport the catch. Another burden was the high cost of purchasing ice blocks to preserve the excess catch.

With SSF, the production gap was resolved. The facilities benefit 20 processors, 80 workers, and 30 fishermen coming from the coastal barangays of Prieto Diaz. Currently, each *danggit* processor earns an average monthly production capacity of 40 kilograms dried deboned *danggit* sold at PHP100-120 each pack of 200 grams.

The DTI-provided facility did not only improve the income of *danggit* processors and fisherfolks in Prieto Diaz, it also opened other business opportunities for fishermen in the neighboring towns of Gubat and Bulusan who now sell their fresh catch to *danggit* processors in Prieto Diaz.

Coco waste turns into geo-nets and twines

Abundance in the cocoland

by Jocelyn Berango
 Photographer: Jocelyn Berango



Dominador Escoto Jr., an engineer by profession, left his job in Manila which he had served for 12 years after finding a compelling reason to return to Sorsogon, his hometown. Sorsogon's promise as lucrative source of coco fiber was getting the market's attention and their 21-hectare coconut plantation has abundant supply.

In 2005, he established the Gubat Agri-tech Industries Co. (GAICO), now a supplier of geo-nets and coco-twines to the Department of Public Works and Highways and Energy Development Corporation. DTI had also assisted Eng. Escoto through seminars and market matching activities and exhibits to expand his business.

When the SSF project provided semi-mechanized two-ply twining machines to selected coco coir processors from the five cluster barangays of Gubat life was never the same again. With enhanced production capacity, the machines increased the income of the coco coir twiners in the communities of Jupidita, Payawin-Carriedo, Patag-Paco, Nato-San Ignacio, and Bentuco-Tabi.

Five SSF projects were established in the municipality of Gubat wherein 50 sets of semi-mechanized two-ply twining machines were farmed out to 50 coco coir processors across five cluster barangays. The new sets of processing equipment for the coco coir industry were accepted with much gusto by the coco coir twine makers.

Directly benefitting 50 households, almost everyone is actively engaged in value adding the activity of coco coir twining in their respective homes. Aside from the daily income, they could likewise attend to the family needs and take care of their children.

Most households, while the father is out on the farm, continue to twine and when the father comes home, they can start making ropes. That's why most of them say that the machines are an integral part of their family, and as such, are well taken care of.

With the equipment entrusted to them, production of coco coir twines increased from 50-150 to 80-250 hanks per day. Correspondingly, this increased their income from PHP125-PHP375 to PHP200-PHP625 per day. Assured of a steady income, parents look forward to sending their children to school to obtain that college degree that they never had the chance to have.

Meanwhile, the company's assets have grown to PHP10M. The engineer is not just basking in the glow of his business as a successful social enterprise, his satisfaction also lies in putting to life his father's long-held dream of helping people in the rural areas.

Now that DTI's Shared Service Facility Program had reached and benefitted some 50 families and coco coir processors in his town, Engr. Escoto's business enterprise has sufficient supply of twines which has tripled with the provision of twining machines to processors. With the volume of twines that the coco twine processors produce each day, GAICO expects to meet the growing demands for coco coir products and sustain its standing as a major source of coco-based products in Sorsogon.

With the possibility of GAICO increasing its various coco-based products such as geo nets, rugs, and plant containers, further business opportunities are up and coming in these coco farm communities.

Forging mutually beneficial business partnerships in small communities

The fiber that weaves communities together

by Ma. Stella Caldera and Chriszela Ramos

Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



Photographers: David Israel F. Sinay, Dela Cruz House of Piña

Susima M. Dela Cruz ventured into the ancient Aklanon tradition of piña weaving as early as 1960s, at a time when the people engaged in the various levels of production were not working in synergy, and the job index was southbound.

In 1986, Rhodora “Ding” D. Sulangi, Susima’s daughter, continued her mother’s legacy and formally managed the **Dela Cruz House of Piña** with a couple of weavers under her employ, along with some indirect workers who helped sustain her venture. They helped

revive and professionalize the industry as we know it today, and empowered its workers to live better lives.

In 1993, Sulangi saw an opportunity to diversify by engaging in the production of *nito*, a type of vine that clings to trees and grows locally. When she was enjoined by DTI to participate in the Manila Furniture Apparel Manufacturers Exchange (FAME) that year, Sulangi only had 11 weavers – and an international market waiting to be tapped. Four years later, she participated in the 1997 National Trade Fair and

impressed representatives of Ethan Allen, a furniture store in the US who placed an order.

In 2011, Sulangi expanded further by adding abaca macramé placemats, runners, and obi sash for the Japanese market. DTI-Aklan provided training in macramé weaving to a small community to ensure that production requirements are met.

Keeping abreast with the latest trends, the company availed of the product development services of Design Center Philippines and PJ Arañador, an



international lifestyle designer, through DTI. Their showroom is a testament to this.

Today, Dela Cruz House of Piña is hailed as the first and leading Aklanon exporter of nito products, with markets in the USA, Japan, and Malaysia posting an average annual export sales of USD300,000 for its nito lines, as well as a strong market share in Manila with an average annual domestic sales of PHP2.4 million.

Even in the most difficult circumstances, Dela Cruz House of Piña did not retrench any of their workers whom Sulangi considers to be her company's best asset. This social responsibility is not just lip service. Upon learning that some of her co-workers who lived in a depressed community were having issues with water supply, she readily provided the much-needed water system.

These days, Dela Cruz House of Piña helps sustain a thriving livelihood for smaller companies and village enterprises, creating job opportunities for more than 3,000 community-based nito weavers across the Province of Aklan. The fiber that built the company continues to weave a bright light in the Aklanon communities.

For a local agri-based, modest establishment, going herbal is the key Brewing a headway into a house of progress

by David Israel F. Sinay
Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



In a world that is increasingly health conscious, herbal brews have become part of a healthy lifestyle. The demand has steadily increased, and for those who can supply it, there is a steady source of additional income.

The medicinal herbs are part of the landscape that we grew up in, though we never paid attention to them until we felt ill and an herbal poultice is needed to get well.

Rodolfo Gentica, 65, from San Jose, Antique, never thought harvesting fresh *babana* leaves and lemongrass could provide him additional income. "We never thought we can gain something from it. It motivated us to plant more," he said.

Gentica is a supplier of raw materials for Balay Kauswagan Resource Center (BKRC) which processes a variety of herbal brews from *sambong*, *lagundi*, *banaba*, *babana*, lemongrass and turmeric with variants

using either raw or coconut sugar, and in tea bags without sugar. BKRC was established in 2010 and is managed by Process Foundation Panay Inc. and sees to it that they have sufficient supply of raw materials to make the herbal brew production sustainable, especially with the increasing demands.

Another supplier, Luciano Baldivia, 53, said that he started planting more *lagundi* and *banaba* trees. "*Hindi pinapansin ang mga dahon na yan noon* (the leaves were just ignored before)," he said. Also into diversified farming, Baldivia proudly states that he was able to buy three motorcycles out of his additional income from the herbal leaves.

Process Foundation Manager Lorena C. Navallasca said that the household products had to be reformulated to have a more consistent quality. DTI conducted a series of comprehensive trainings from product development to marketing,

and facilitated its participation to trade fairs and market linkages. "We have improved our packaging and quality, made adjustments to the level of sweetness most acceptable to the market, and sought DTI's assistance to help us with our label, thereby improving our products all around," Navallasca avows. BKRC represents "a house for development" not just for farmers but also for partner communities.

In 2013, the Department of Science and Technology granted them a loan for their equipment. As of February 2016, the loan has been paid. Unencumbered, their income now goes to the improvement of their area.

Today, the BKRC has 560 farming households providing them the raw materials needed for the production of herbal brews from the municipalities of Culasi, Tibiao, San Jose, Sibalom, Hamtic and Anini-y, all from the Province of Antique.

The country's seafood capital offers more

Capiz reemerges from its shell

by Ken Queenie Cuñada

Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



There is no denying that Capiz is famous for its abundant supply of seafood. But look again, guests as well as locals now travel with a more diverse product offering as *pasalubong* from the seafood capital of the Philippines.

Thanks to DTI's establishment of a Shared Service Facility for Toll Packaging Center, more start-ups are emerging and creating a niche in various markets. The center is a functional, service-oriented facility designed to boost the competitiveness of Capiz's micro and small enterprises by enhancing productivity and efficiency.

One of the products that benefited from the center is the Spanggo's Frozen Vacuum-Packed Buko Pie which underwent a comprehensive study to establish shelf life. The product was tested under different sensorial/panel analyses and evaluation and was determined that under the standard frozen condition, the pie's shelf life is 11 months from production date. Spanggo was also provided guidance in improving the packaging of their products as well as information on the supply of food-grade and flexible packaging materials.

Janice Anne D. Zaldarriaga, proprietress of the Spanggo Delicacies and Pasalubong is grateful for the chance to expand her market share and is looking forward to penetrating the export market.

Betty Burata, manager of CAPROX Health Products, acknowledges the role the center played in exploring

opportunities outside their traditional market for Ginge, a ginger brew with four variants available in SM Supermarket, Hypermarket, Save More, Black&White Supermarket and Robinson Supermarkets, all named commercial establishments. Ginge is likewise poised to penetrate the export market.

CANESA Sugar Central, Inc. based in Parian, Sigma, Capiz produces muscovado, an unrefined brown sugar preferred by health-conscious people and exported in countries where quality standards are stringent. CANESA availed of the center's services in 2015, developing appropriate packaging and relay-outing of their plant to make it more efficient and compliant to FDA requirements.

Martina's Food Products in Roxas City is now enjoying brisk market sales of their vacuum-packed milkfish relleno after a series of consultation sessions with the Center. The center helped the product to achieve a three-month shelf life in vacuum packed, chilled condition. Martina's Milkfish Rellenos are now odor and retard-fermentation free.

The Toll Packaging Center is a collaboration among the Provincial Government of Capiz, the Capiz Provincial Small and Medium Enterprise Development Council and DTI. It was established in March 2015 and launched on December 7 of the same year.

A chemist made it big in food processing venture

In her best elements

by Melecia Pait and David Israel F. Sinay
Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



To say that Rebecca C. Tubongbanua of Buenavista, Guimaras, is a determined woman is definitely an understatement. With PHP7,000 as start-up capital, she went into fruit processing in her sister-in-law's 20-square meter abandoned house and with unwavering resolve and singularity of purpose, proceeded to climb the proverbial ladder of success.

The route Rebecca took is not uncharted. She worked as production manager for a company engaged in developing calamansi and mango-based products but the company's financial woes made staying untenable.

Armed with an academic degree in chemistry, Rebecca was literally in her elements as she ventured into the processing of raw materials. She established McNester Food Products, named after her sons Macmac and Ralph Nester, in August 19, 2003. The former employee was now her own boss.

Initially, Rebecca's products were sold only in Guimaras. With DTI assistance, she improved her packaging materials with the help of an artist, learned bookkeeping, joined trade fairs, and was linked with new markets including Iloilo, Cebu, Manila, and other parts of the country going across West Philippine Sea to China and Korea.

Rebecca's once makeshift processing area has now grown to 126 square meters, with 10 regular employees and five on-call workers during peak months. She invested in equipment such as stainless stock vat, steam jacketed kettle, mechanical dryer, solar tunnel dryer, and band sealers.

Business was brisk with a sales range from PHP60,000 to PHP100,000 a month in 2011, with calamansi concentrate as the top seller, followed by, in descending order, mango concentrate, mango catsup, mango sauce, mango pickles, and mango jams.

Tubongbanua opted to concentrate in the domestic market where the products are doing good. In 2015, the company's estimated monthly sales for one supermarket outlet in Iloilo City alone was PHP150,000. In 2010, the company's gross receipt sales amounted to PHP1.2 million and reached PHP3.6 million in 2015.

McNester Food Products has 25 variants of juice concentrates, such as mango, calamansi, pineapple-based products ranging from jams, juice, concentrates, polvoron, pastilles, marmalade, and ketchup, among others.

Rebecca is now working to acquire a License To Operate from the Food and Drug Administration and branch out to other key provinces such as Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, and Palawan.

From selling during traditional market days to breaking into the world market

Gingerly going from the hinterlands to the world

by David Israel F. Sinay
Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



Igpigus is a remote village in the mountainous area of Igbaras, near the boundary of Tubungan town in the hinterlands of Iloilo province.

The people of Igpigus used to sell organic ginger in nearby markets or supply bulk orders to processors of ginger-based blends.

Due to the distance and expenses required to transport their products, most of them would sell on Wednesdays and Sundays, designated market days, when jeepneys ply the 14-kilometer distance. The alternative mode of transport would be the more expensive motorcycles.

The abundance of organic ginger in the municipality prompted Engr. Wilfredo E. Delgado, the municipal planning and development coordinator, to identify and propose that the locals undergo skills training on ginger processing, one of the menus under the Bottom-up Budgeting of DTI.

After the training, DTI provided

them with two blenders, large pans, measuring cups and other utensils needed for the processing of ginger brew. Aside from these, DTI also provided packaging materials such as bottles and stand-up pouches for packaging.

"Farmers would now sell their products directly to us after harvest," states Brgy. Secretary Ma. Sallie T. Escobañas, also the president of Igpigus Ginger Growers Association. "They don't have to pay for transport costs anymore."

The DTI likewise offered consultancy on label design and urged them to join small and medium enterprise trainings. Escobañas said that they regularly join trade fairs to aggressively introduce their products in the market.

From the production of ginger brew in 2014, the association added three variants to its line: ginger brew with turmeric; turmeric with lemon grass and ginger; and, turmeric brew. The product

expansion enabled the group to buy six additional blenders and one electric grinder and crusher.

There was a time when people lost interest in ginger production because market prices were unstable and drastically drop during harvest time. Now, you can sell it at PHP60.00 a kilo compared to just PHP20.00 even during harvest time. Not surprisingly, ginger production doubled, from 10 hectares prior to the establishment of ginger brew processing to 20 hectares.

With 10 full-time processors, the group markets their products in nearby municipalities of Tubungan, San Joaquin, Guimbal and even some markets in Negros Occidental, Cavite and Metro Manila. With only about two years of production, the group has already shipped orders from clients based in the United States, Israel, Hong Kong and Switzerland.



A passion for woven fashion becomes an infectious fever

Miagao women pin hopes on hablon

by David Israel F. Sinay
Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



The Philippines has contributed a number of distinctive products to the world of textile and fashion. *Hablon* is Iloilo's share of this communal wealth. Using age-old techniques and traditional designs, the *hablon* is a hand-loomed combination of cotton, abaca, and other indigenous fibers.

Jessica Tijing, 26, left work as a sales lady in the town proper of Miag-ao, Iloilo because she could barely make ends meet. She opted to take advantage of her skills in loom weaving, which she learned from her mother, and joined the **Indag-an Primary Multi-Purpose Cooperative (IPMPC)** located just steps away from their home. She now earns an average of a thousand pesos weekly, more than she earned from her previous job. She even gets to save more because she does not have to spend for transportation or eat out. She even earns extra whenever there are bulk orders.

Established in 1991, the cooperative previously engaged in various profitable undertakings. However, handloom weaving remains to be their only sustainable and financially viable activity. *Hablon* weaving has become an institution in the community and a way of life for the residents of Brgy. Indag-an, located five kilometers away from Miagao town proper.

"Almost all women in the village know how to weave, it is an integral part of our culture," states Concordia F. Facto, 64, one of the pioneering members who established the cooperative. "Almost every household has a loom," she said.

It used to be that the weavers individually sold their pieces to interested buyers with orders few and far between. When the cooperative was organized, one of the first benefits the weavers enjoyed was the exposure of their products.

Their ventures in product showcases locally and nationally, organized by DTI, increased their income, thanks to volume orders of shawls and scarves that have been constantly subjected to reviews to ensure quality.

Marjorie Segurigan, IPMPC Chairman of the Board, said that in prior years the cooperative could hardly reach a million-peso income from sales and bulk orders. In 2015, however, with their continued involvement in seminars and trade fairs, they earned PHP1.2 million in gross receipts, PHP200,000 more than their previous year's gross receipts. Before reaching the million pesos mark, they averaged from PHP600,000 to PHP700,000 in gross receipts.

Thanks to DTI, their skills were honed, their marketing abilities enhanced, and their pride about their workmanship soared. At present, the cooperative has 77 members with 25 weavers, 10 of whom are working full-time.

The interlacing art form captures the global imagination

The nascent of a weaving lifestyle

by Vierna Teresa Ligan and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Vierna Teresa Ligan and Jojisilia Villamor



Weaving as an art form demands patience, skills, and attention to details. The more intricate the pattern or design, the longer it takes and the more taxing it becomes.

Eutropia Cosinera, past president of Tubigon Loomweavers Multi Purpose Cooperative (TLMPC) recounts that they were like fish out of water when they were trained in weaving *raffia*. DTI took them through their paces, instructing them on material preparation, handloom basics, and product design.



Organized in 1989, TLMPC uses *raffia*, a fiber obtained from the young shoot or leaf of the *buri* palm, which is made into wall coverings, upholstery and wrapping materials,

hats, mats, bags, and decors. The group concentrates on rolls of fabric, placemats, table runners, tea mats, and coasters.

TLMPC was a beneficiary of a PHP1.26 million handloom weaving facility through DTIs Shared Service Facility that improved the competitiveness of MSMEs by providing them with machines, tools, and skills under a shared system.



Last year, TLMPC was matched with Cebu-based exporters and institutions that provided technical expertise, product development, and even funds. Prior to the SSF project, TLMPCs production volume was at 60 meters per month using the 30 small wooden handlooms.

Trina Sumayang, the manager of TLMPC, said that with the additional 15 new handlooms under the SSF and six from the private sector, production volume increased by 1,260 meters per month or an average of 52 meters per day. The quality of the woven fabrics has remarkably also improved. With the new facilities installed, average income per weaver per day is PHP300 for the 72-inch wide handloom.



Under DTIs mentorship and guidance under the Export Pathways Program, the cooperative has moved a notch up the competitiveness ladder from Level 4 (Market Readiness Stage) in 2014 to Level 5 (Market Entry Stage) in January this year.

Starting in 2014, new product lines were designed as architectural finishes for hotels and resort chains in China, Malaysia, Macao, the US, and Japan. Designs are also being developed for prospects such as Issey Miyake, Hermes, and some known European brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel,

and Dior, through their local exporters and foreign buying offices.

This phenomenal growth of TLMPC inspired both government and private sectors to further collaborate in order to provide more income and livelihood opportunities for the women and residents of Tubigon.

Today, DTI sees TLMPC as a perfect example of a women-led enterprise that not only supports its workers but also provides opportunities for residents to gain access to a wider range of services and income generating activities.

A business commitment with heart and soul and perhaps, a sweet tooth

The *calamaderas* in Jagna

by Yoradyl Israel and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Yoradyl Israel and Jojisilia Villamor



Calamay is a sticky, sweet delicacy made from ground glutinous rice, brown sugar, and coconut milk and commonly made by women who are called *calamaderas*. It has become synonymous with Jagna, Bohol and is sold by vendors in the port area.

For Jagna-anons, *calamay*-making is considered a common livelihood. There are about 200 *calamay* makers from five barangays in Jagna; Can-upao, Looc, Pagina, Bunga Ilaya, and Canjulao.

Maribel Bucog is a member of the **Jagna Calamay Makers and Vendors Association (JACAMAVEA)**, the first organization formed in the early 1980s for Jagna's *calamay* makers.

"I supported the development of the *calamay* industry and participated in crafting the *calamay* production and marketing strategic plan," Bucog proudly states. "In the activities that

required our presence, I was among those who attended and encouraged others to participate."

In 2009, the **Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project** of the Philippine Commission on Women and DTI asked the members of JACAMAVEA if they were willing to collaborate for the improvement of their industry. Forty-three out of 60 members declared their commitment.

During the implementation of the project, collaborative efforts were made by the LGU to support the small *calamay* industry. One of these is the creation of the Calamay Convergence of Partners under the auspices of DTI.

In 2013, the **Shared Service Facility for Calamay Processing** was launched in Jagna. With this facility, new technologies were applied, increasing

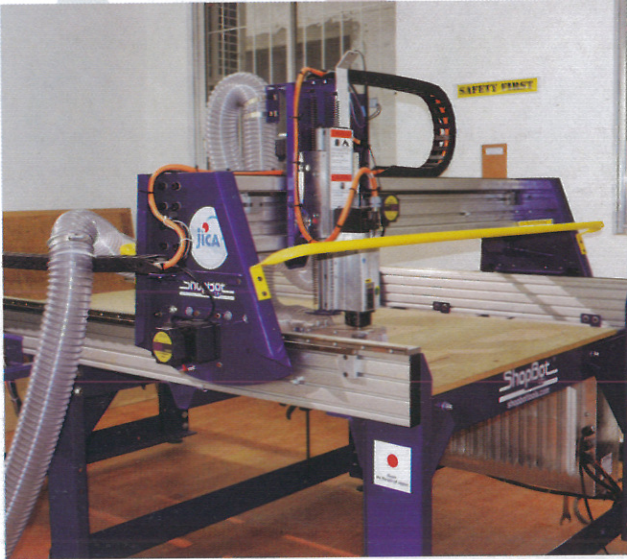
the shelf life of the product from three to 14 days. The trolleys and racks eased the work of *calamaderas* during production. All materials are made of food grade stainless steel that conforms to FDA requirements for food safety. Now the facility is fully operational, employing 38 members plus six more persons outside the cooperative, producing around 24,000 pieces of *calamay* each month with an average sale of PHP180,000 and reaching more markets in Tagbilaran City.

"If change is to happen, there must be a change of mindset. To have tangible results, the process must have concrete steps," Bucog maintains. "Change should begin from within (the *calamaderas*). Government assistance will be meaningless if the *calamaderas* are not open and committed to embrace change."

A fabulous hub for creating, learning, and sharing

The Cutting-edge FabLab creates new paradigm

*by Vierna Teresa Ligan and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Vierna Teresa Ligan and Jojisilia Villamor*



the FabLab foundation of a strong network of accelerators, complementers, and collaborators. With cutting edge technology, FabLab Bohol is a big boost to the province's recovery efforts after the devastation caused by the 2013 earthquake.

Even when it was just starting, FabLab Bohol hosted the first FabLab Asia Network (FAN1) conference in 2014. Representatives from India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, East Timor, Italy and China participated in the weeklong event.

Today, FabLab Bohol helps develop the local economy with better and more competitive products. It encourages start-ups and develops entrepreneurs who create more jobs. Innovation and creativity are key to ensure that MSMEs are at par with global market demand.

FabLab Bohol is now home to more than a hundred designers, makers, MSMEs, and even students. Together they collaborate, build, share information, and experience work in new ways. As a result of its success, FabLab Bohol is being replicated at the University of Philippines in Cebu City.

"Product design and packaging are a big challenge for manufacturers in Bohol," states Yutaka Tokushima, a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer designer at DTI-Bohol. "Helping the local manufacturers adapt to new technology is one way to address it."

Tokushima came up with the concept of a fabrication laboratory (FabLab) to make a platform of co-creation for solving common problems in Bohol. With MSMEs comprising 99 percent of businesses in the island, DTI was amenable to the idea of an innovation laboratory and pushed for the establishment of FabLab Bohol in 2014.

The main goal for the facility is to develop a technology-based solution that will propel local MSMEs to make products that are more attuned to the demands of the global market. Tokushima believed that the FabLab will help enhance the marketability of local products, enabling manufacturers to update their designs, or enhance their product's packaging.

Funds for the operation of FabLab Bohol, the first fabrication laboratory in the Philippines, were generated through the Shared Service Facility project of DTI, the Department of Science and Technology, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Bohol Island State University where FabLab Bohol is currently housed.

Volunteers from Australia and Japan assisted in developing the FabLab's business model – a place to create, learn, and share. These volunteers also helped in building



From traditional preparations to novel creations, a Boholana brings the *tablea* back into the groove

The *sikwate* turns into gold

by Yoradyl Israel and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Yoradyl Israel and Jojisilia Villamor

The typical Boholano breakfast is never without that hot cup of chocolate locally known as *sikwate*. For Dalariech Polot, who has known *sikwate* since childhood, it has transformed from being just a morning routine to a way of making a living.

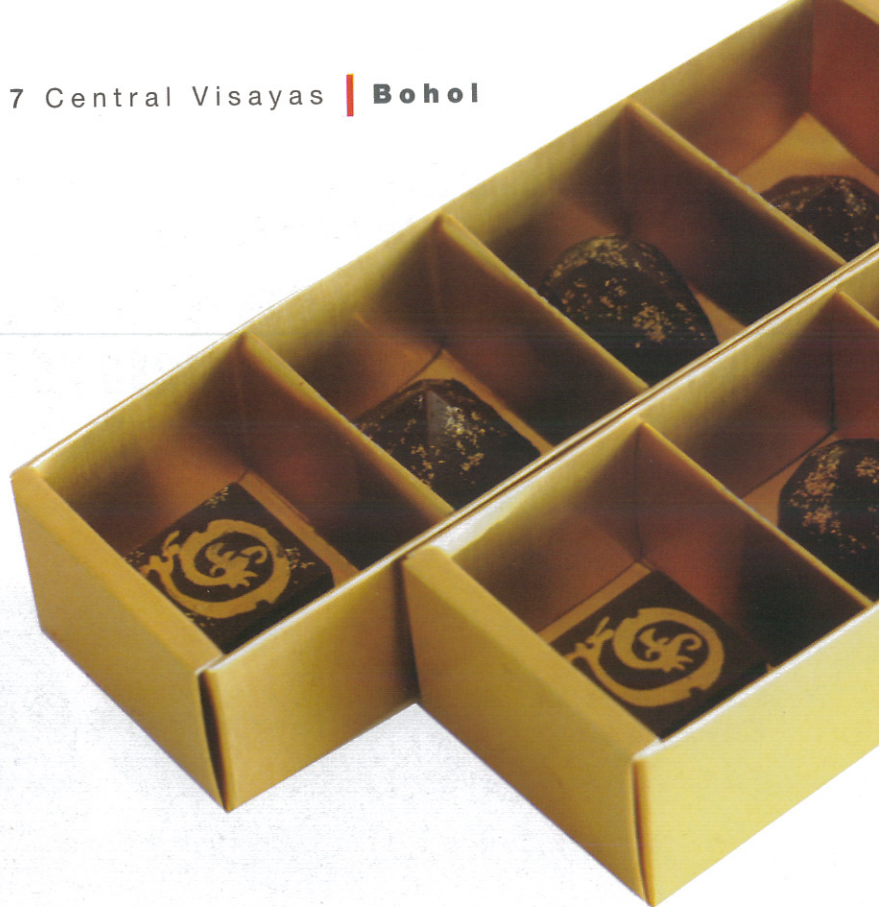
"As a child I dreamt of creating the highest quality chocolates using our amazing local ingredients," Dalariech said. "My mother made and sold *tablea*, those small slabs of dried, roasted and ground cacao beans that, with a *batidor*, became a chocolate drink.

The daughter of a tricycle driver and a street cleaner, Dalariech yearned for a better life, and looked at the

tablea as a way to attain success. An opportunity to pursue her dream opened when DTI endorsed her participation and served as adviser in a business plan competition, the 2013 Young Women Entrepreneur Bootcamp by the Samahan ng mga Pilipina para sa Reporma at Kaunlaran or Spark!. She emerged as grand winner raking in a prize of USD5,000.

In 2014, she earned a full scholarship for a chocolate making course at Ghent University in Belgium. When she came back, she immediately applied everything she knew. She





hurdled challenges, including a climate that is not ideal for chocolate making. Through constant experimentation and regular consultations with DTI's food technologist, Polot was able to come up with high-quality edibles made from the local cocoa beans.

Today, Polot is living her dream. In 2015, she launched her line of luxury chocolates made from raw cacao beans — the **Ginto Chocolates**. The company produces pralines filled with fillings such as: *calamansi*, coconut, milk, mangoes, and coffee liquor. She's releasing a line of artisanal chocolates with a hint of local chili, mint, and coconut. The products are sold to resorts and restaurants and earning wonders from foreigners because they are unique, handcrafted, and with flavors that you cannot find anywhere else.

Ginto Chocolates is among the micro, small and medium enterprises that have availed of DTI's SME Roving Academy, a continuous learning program for the development of MSMEs to become competitive in the domestic and international markets.



A bee farm in a resort or a resort in a bee farm? **The bees' buzz is great for biz**

by Nita Balaba and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Nita Balaba and Jojisilia Villamor



The Bohol Bee Farm in Dausi, Bohol is a five-hectare property located in a promontory of a rolling terrain. The resort is owned by Vicky Sandidge, a Boholana and former New York-based nurse.

A chance encounter with a friend who encouraged her to attend a beekeeping seminar led to the fulfillment of her dream of going into business.

With an initial two colonies of bees, she put up her first bee farm in Inabanga, some 60 kilometers away from where she eventually put up her resort. A hands-on kind of person, she personally bottled the honey they produced and sold them door-to-door, along with vegetables from the farm.



As the business grew, Vicky rented a property in the same town and put up a total of 200 bee colonies. Through the years, Bohol Bee Farm became known in the province. Vicky opened her farm to guests and welcomed visitors to her restaurant called "The Buzz" that offered delectable food using ingredients grown on her farm. As the company diversified, the bee farm became a resort with rooms, restaurants, facilities, and amenities embellished with local materials. She sourced items from local farmers, craftsmen, and artisans for use as room decors, furnishings, even kitchen ingredients.

Vicky says, "If we want to help raise the farmers' standard of living, we need to create markets for their products."

Her signature items, organically-grown fruits and vegetables are used in preparing ice cream, pesto, bread, and oils, along with other natural and organic products are regular features in DTI-organized trade fairs.

Many of the 270 employees of Bohol Bee Farm have been with the company since it started fifteen years ago, including several second-generation workers. They are provided stable jobs and also a place to live on the farm.

Today, the Bohol Bee Farm restaurant "The Buzz" have branches in Panglao town, Tagbilaran City, and Cebu City. Indeed, Vicky has come a long way, creating a model of how sustainable business and social entrepreneurship can be successfully merged.



From the domain of the impoverished to the realm of high indulgence The warrior comes home to the chocolate queen's world

by Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor
Photographers: Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor



"My life as a rebel was a bitter experience. I was hungry all the time," recounts Dionicio Rodriguez. "I only ate *ubod sa bugay*," a bud of marsh grass that water buffalos graze on.

Dionicio was a former rebel in the mountains of Balamban during the Marcos regime. When their commander died after a fierce encounter with the military, he and his comrades surrendered to the government. Dionicio then lived a quiet life tilling a parcel of land owned by his grandparents.

When the property was sold to a Chinese entrepreneur, Dionicio knew he had to vacate the farmland. Fortunately for Dionicio, Raquel, the wife of Alfred Choa who acquired their land, allowed him to stay.

"It was in 2011 when I first met Ma'am Raquel," Dionicio recalls. "I could tell she was interested in working with us farmers. She was very reassuring and specific about what she wanted us to undertake."

Raquel had a passion for making *tablea* or processed cacao in cylindrical slabs. Before long, she was able to establish a chocolate house called Ralfe Gourmet which she personally managed. The Chocolate Chamber and The Chocolate Boutique came a few years after Ralfe Gourmet, Inc. was established. Ralfe Gourmet benefited from DTI's technical assistance as well as consultancy under the DTI's Regional Interactive Platform for Philippine Exporters or RIPPLES.

She whipped-up high-end indulgences like chocolate pralines with truffles, quick melting chocolate discs, and cookies with cacao nibs, creations that were protected with the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL). This caught the fancy of her discriminating clientele, an A-list crowd. Not surprisingly, her products became a staple in the homes of the elite as well as at state events, including the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit hosted by the Philippines last year. So far, the company only has trademark and copyright registrations with the IPOPHL.

Tagged as The Chocolate Queen of Cebu, this chocolate artisan also came from an impoverished past. Under the watchful eyes of her grandmother, Raquel learned everything she knows about chocolates.

To help farmers and former rebels in Balamban, Cebu, Raquel embarked on a program to distribute cacao seedlings, sharing with them ways of processing cacao and making handcrafted chocolate products for sale.

Dionicio divulges that Choa also shares her earnings with them through a monthly salary. “She continues to pay our wages even when we are unproductive with no cacao to process,” Dionicio admits, coyly. “She would advise us to plant other crops for our own consumption.”



A marketing platform helping small local start-ups make it big in a highly competitive environment

Of good taste and holistic innovations

by Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor
Photographers: Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor



There is more to Cebu than *lechon*, *masareal*, *chicharon* and dried mangoes. Today, Cebu is also the hub of a creative synthesis between buyers who are friendlier to the environment and meticulous about the source materials for products they acquire, and manufacturers who are mindful of their responsibilities as stewards of natural resources.

Among the organizations responding to the demands of the changing times is HoliCOW, a playful acronym for Holistic Coalition of the Willing. Organized in 2011, HoliCOW is an association of Cebu-based designer-manufacturers espousing holistic innovation, gathering some of the Philippines' best designers and innovators to cultivate designs geared towards a sustainable future.

"HoliCOW provides a platform for micro, small and medium enterprises who need to connect with designers and their market," explains HoliCOW General Manager Kae Batiquin. "We

help strengthen the local economy by promoting locally made products. In the past, most of our products were made from Cebu, now we have items coming from Bohol and Negros Island."

Serving as a window to the world, HoliCOW is a boon for small business owners such as Lucil Alesna Barbieros, proprietor of Sulci Handicraft Trading that manufactures bags and placemats. Lucil's company is among the micro businesses that use the HoliCOW showroom to display their products, which are made by housewives who mostly work from home.

HoliCOW tries to integrate all players in the informal and formal sectors within the value chain of creative products: from people's organization in remote areas that supply raw and semi-processed materials based on renewable resources; designers and manufacturers who follow sustainable principles; and retailers who look into social entrepreneurship and want to

provide any kind of supplier an option to maintain the idea of sustainable products and consumption.

"HoliCOW offers better trading conditions and secures the rights of marginalized producers and workers in the locality," Batiquin expounds. "We only purchase products at their standard market price."

Originally orientated towards the foreign market, locals responded positively, prompting HoliCOW to open a showroom along Banilad road in Cebu City where products by member-companies are sold to the local market for much less than the export price.

With more local manufacturers like HoliCOW applying a balance of good practices in sourcing, processing and packaging, Cebu may yet see a brighter future dedicated to elevating the local manufacturing industry and craft through an inclusive and holistic approach.

Economy. Environment. Food security.

No wasted opportunity for this pioneering company

by Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor
Photographers: Jojisilia Villamor and Shirelyn Villamor

Almost all of us routinely throw away our mango waste, not realizing that it can be converted into high-value products such as mango flour, mango feed mix, mango brew, mango-cassava flour, and mango-coconut flour. Mango also contains pectin, a soluble gelatinous polysaccharide that is present in ripe fruits and is extracted for use to jell various foods, drugs, and cosmetics.

No bandwagon effect here. The process is patented, not just with the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines but also with the World Intellectual Property Office's Patent Cooperation Treaty.

The innovative process developed by the University of San Carlos (USC) Department of Chemical Engineering became the first success story of intellectual property (IP) commercialization from a Filipino academic institution.

According to Dr. Danilo B. Largo, Director, Office of Research and Manager

of the Innovation and Technology Support Office of USC, the idea of IP commercialization first took hold within the BioProcess Engineering Research Center (BioPERC), part of USC's Chemical Engineering Department. BioPERC houses the University's most advanced laboratory, specializing in chemical analyses of natural and fermentation products. The Center's research focuses on waste and energy and has spawned a number of breakthrough technologies that improve the management of solid waste.

Having secured the process, USC entered into a joint venture with Green Enviro Management Systems Inc. (GEMS), a local investor, to create a small start-up company with the exclusive license to use the process and produce products for a wide range of applications in the food, pharmaceutical, personal care, and energy industries.

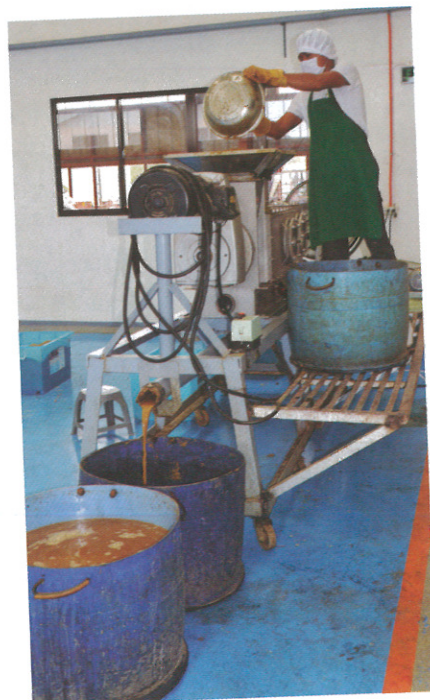
Today, GEMS has evolved into a pioneering company that relies on a

breakthrough in technology, converting mango waste materials into high-value products that help sustain the food needs of a growing nation.

Through a series of DTI organized seminars and trainings geared towards business development and marketing, GEMS's operations grew and flourished. Moreover, GEMS provides opportunities for the underprivileged, even hiring those coming from Cebu's dumpsites.

"I was jubilant when GEMS gave me a job," April Frelin Delgado, a former scavenger, recounts. "Applying for a job is difficult, particularly for someone like me who only finished Grade 3."

It was in 2015 when an association for the underprivileged in Cebu assisted April in landing a job with GEMS. She is not alone. The innovative and revolutionary company has come to the rescue of other less fortunate members of society who wanted to be productive rather than be a burden.



SSF program brings vibrancy to this weaving community “Waste no more, income pa more”

by Rae Julianne Alfaro

Photographers: Anna Eunice R. Alejandre, Rae Julianne S. Alfaro, Dennis Balotite, Virgilio Bonjoc, Jr. and Faustino V. Gayas



The DTI Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program at the Sto. Niño de Plaridel Parish Multi-Purpose Cooperative (SNPPMPC), boosted the production and sales of the small and medium enterprises in the barangay of Plaridel in Baybay City. Operations in the first seven months using the new SSF facilities such as the specialized sewing machines, production of pandan leaf and bariw leaf products significantly increased production by almost 50 percent. From the simple bayong (woven reed bag), the sewers and weavers can now create bags in various styles and sizes.

With the use of the SSF machines, utilization of the raw materials was maximized keeping the cost of production at the minimum. Even the smallest pieces of pandan strips, fabrics, and foam, considered as wastes, are now made into souvenir items. Apart from that, producers and enterprises could now create more with the sewing machines readily available at reasonable and affordable rental cost. Sewing edges to a placemat, for example, is charged five pesos per piece in shops while it costs only half with the SSF. As production increases, the cost reduces. With this DTI's program, it's "waste no more, income pa more."

It used to be that the market consisted only of walk-in customers, but eventually, after participating in trade fairs, the

weavers expanded their market by getting buyers from cities such as Manila and Cebu. They now export to the USA and Indonesia through direct exporters such as Toribio Almendra, Y-Nonas Creation, and Gregorio C. Ataquez Jr. Weavers are no longer hesitant to accept big volume orders as SSF beneficiaries work as one team, coop or non-coop members, to meet volume orders on time.

Some beneficiaries have leveled up from being mat weavers to be good designers of their own products. The cooperative encourages them to create products with all the raw materials provided by the cooperative including the use of the facilities for free to enhance their skills and talents. On top of that, it also pays for new designs. Moreover, the cooperative had started to diversify and is now into producing garments and embroidered curtains.

With the acquisition of new machines, the SNPPMPC attracted more members, an impressive 20 percent increase from 466 to 560 members in a relatively short span of time.

Sales for the year 2014 amounted to PHP575,000 including those of the other associations. In 2015, however, in barely seven months after the SSF launching, sales rose to PHP860,000.

Business uplifts farmers in an agrarian reform community Of coco shells and carahorns

by Mary Gwyndele O. Ponferrada
Photographers: Mary Gwyndelle O. Ponferrada



Lolo Bobby Handicrafts of Bato, Leyte, had humble beginnings. Using sharp bolos as tools, two male employees produced about 200 pieces of coco shell placemats for sale within the region for an average monthly sale of PHP15,000.

It's proprietor, Renilda Kuizon, steered the enterprise into competitiveness by innovating and improving its products with the help of the DTI. The company started joining local trade fairs and various product development activities initiated and coordinated with DTI and the Department of Agrarian Reform's (DAR) Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program's Small and Medium Industrial Technology Transfer Development Program.

Consistently exhibiting its product in the local trade fairs, Lolo Bobby Handicrafts exposed itself to a bigger and wider market and enabled to link it with institutional buyers outside the region. The enterprise also had the opportunity to participate in product clinics initiated by the Design Center Philippines in Manila.

Pretty soon, Lolo Bobby Handicrafts produced high-quality lampshades and house furnishings as well as components of fashion accessories such as necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Workers increased to 12 male regular employees with a number of women who assemble components for bulk orders.

As a result of the product development activities, Mrs. Kuizon started to train her sights to carahorns and other

raw materials that came in abundance from the farmer-beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform Community (ARC) near the manufacturing area in Bato. The ARC farmers earned additional income by selling the copra waste, the coco shells, and discarded carahorns to Lolo Bobby Handicrafts contributing 70 percent of the materials used to create export-quality products. At this time, production capacity has increased to 80 percent supplying products to Manila-based exporters to Japan, Netherlands, and Guam.

As an active member of the PhilExport-Eastern Visayas Chapter and a beneficiary of the DTI-National Industry Cluster Capability Enhancement Project, the handicraft firm further focused into market expansion and product development in keeping with the current trends in the local and international markets. Lolo Bobby Handicrafts has also been a regular participant in Manila FAME, a CITEM-organized fair for national and international institutional buyers. Currently, sales generates at a monthly average of PHP100,000 benefitting both direct and indirect employees.

Speaking for the Lolo Bobby Handicrafts, Mrs. Kuizon expressed her thanks to the DTI-CARP for helping the business succeed. "With the assistance of DTI and DAR, we were able to innovate our products, expand our market, and increased our sales that also improved the income of our workers and local suppliers."



A grieving mother found comfort in making and selling peanut butter Turning anguish into a winning business

by Claire O. Diaz

Emilda Engo of Catarman, Northern Samar, is a seaman's wife and mother of three. Overwhelmed with grief when she lost her eldest son in a drowning accident in 2009, she considered going into business as a means of coping with her misery.

From her kitchen, she started making peanut butter and offered it around. The lukewarm reception to her peanut butter did not deter her from making more. Then one day to her surprise and joy, the six bottles of peanut butter she consigned to a grocery store were all bought on the same day.

In 2010, Emilda decided to take this "coping up" seriously when customers encouraged her to produce more. To earn legitimacy and increase customer confidence in her product, she registered her business name with DTI, from whom she continually learned not just to improve the quality of her product but how to handle her growing business more competently.

The high school graduate may have initially felt intimidated by government institutions but did not allow her fears to

weaken her resolve like she adamantly refused to have her grief overpower her. Emilda's consultative meetings led to the improvement of her label design, analysis of her product's nutritional content, and eventually an introduction and membership to the Association of Northern Samar Producers, a pool of entrepreneurs assisted by the DTI.

With newly improved product label, the marketability of her Chesmae Nuts and Sweets was boosted. Sales significantly increased and outlets grew in numbers. Her monthly sales of PHP18,000 soared to PHP200,000 even reaching up to PHP250,000.

Doing it on her own since she started, she now employs two regular workers and one part-timer. Emilda's single product outlet expanded to 12, including supermarkets and bakeshops in Catarman, growing further to four more in the towns of San Roque, San Jose, and Mondragon. Today, her product is also being carried by Gaisano Super Mall in Catarman as she braces for the introduction of her product to neighboring provinces.

This mother banked on pop rice and pili nuts to support a family of five **The saleslady turns into an entrepreneur**

by Kristian S. Engo



For Ma. Beata Casiguran, rice and pili nuts are the significant ingredients of her humble success. Raising a family of five children was a daily struggle for this mother who received a meager salary as a saleslady in Allen, Northern Samar. Realizing that her income was not sufficient to cover the needs of her family, she decided to venture into business.

The decision to quit her job was one of the hardest decisions she made in her life. Inexperienced as she was in the field of business, she banked on her knowledge of making piñato (pop rice) from merely observing the process and taking note of the procedures from the pinato producers in the neighboring municipality of Rosario.

She started her first production with a kilo of rice. At that time in 1996, rice grinders were not yet available and she had to pound the rice with her hands in a large wooden mortar. The process was extremely strenuous that she did not even consider making piñato in a larger quantity as her deliveries were

only enough to meet orders previously made. But as she profited out of piñato production, she decided to increase her production and expand her market. This venture became her main source of income.

In 2005, she joined the DTI-assisted Allen Pili Nut Producers Cooperative. As a member, it enabled her to attend seminars on marketing, costing and pricing, personal financial management, and other complementary entrepreneurial skills. She also learned the process of producing pili nut food products. In addition, she was exposed to trade fairs and other marketing activities sponsored by DTI.

Unfortunately, the cooperative dissolved when members went their own way in producing their products. For Beata, she felt the need to further enhance her product. She used the knowledge she gained from the seminars and continued her production of pili sweets and its variants with her piñato as well. Beata was also a Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Project-assisted entrepreneur and as

such, was given the opportunity to improve to a well-designed packaging and labeling for her piñato and pili food products.

Today, she has four workers helping her in the “Beata’s Delicacies” business that gains a monthly average sale of PHP50,000. She continues to participate in the local, provincial, regional, and national trade fairs organized by the local government and by the DTI, the latest of which was the Bahandi 2015. Her market outlets are at the Catarman Airport Pasalubong Center, Linda’s Inn, and a bus terminal in Calbayog, Samar. Now an active member of the Association of Northern Samar Producers, she continues to avail of the assistance given by the DTI and other agencies to the group.

With her experiences, she had learned that persistence and determination are equally important for a business to survive, and an aspiring entrepreneur has to take advantage of every opportunity that comes along the way.

More and more women join the economic superhighway

The working women of Pasobolong

by Gyver D. Amazon and Michael Vincent D. Cajulao

Photographer: Gyver D. Amazon



Economically-empowered women are a force to reckon with. One good example is the Pasobolong Working Women of the Holy Rosary United Parents Association, Incorporated of Zamboanga City. Organized by the Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Holy Rosary in 1999, the association assists women in the community to become productive partners to their husbands in providing for their families through food business. Unfortunately, the climb to success was slow and arduous with their meager resources which hindered them from achieving their full potential.

In August 2013, things turned around for the better with the launching of DTIs Shared Services Facility (SSF) Program with the association as one of the first beneficiaries. They received cooking and packaging equipment needed to boost their production.

"The provision of cooking and

packaging equipment through the DTI's SSF significantly upgraded our food processing facility," acknowledged Ms. Susana L. Cordova, president of the association. "This led to the expansion of our operations and subsequently increased the production volume of our products."

On the average, a remarkable rise in production volume was noted: From 6,000 to 10,000 packs of *alfajor*, a local delicacy of Zamboanga City; from 10,000 to 15,000 packs of banana chips; from 12,000 to 15,000 packs of *chika-chika* (fried noodles); from 500 to 1,000 packs of coconut candies; from 500 to 1,000 packs of *pastillas*; from 400 to 800 packs of tarts; and, from 400 to 800 packs of peanut cake. Manpower also increased to 15 workers. Sales grew by PHP60,000 from PHP90,000 to PHP150,000 per month.

The facilities provided to the group of women also improved the quality of

their products, allowing them to comply with the requirement for a license to operate obtained from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This was necessary in order for their products to reach a wider market, enabling them to penetrate local supermarkets, groceries, and *pasalubong* centers in the city.

Aside from acquiring a license, the improved facilities and production methods brought about by the SSF Project has likewise helped the association comply with the standards set by other regulatory authorities.

Improving the quality of the products also raised the household income of the women, a contribution to the familial partnership. The success of the association proves that empowering women benefit the society in more ways than one. Given the right opportunity and support, women step up from plain housewives to economically productive partners.



Typhoon scraps are gold for this artist

One man's trash is another man's treasure

by Michael Vincent D. Cajulao and John Edgar Macapas
Photographer: John Edgar Macapas

"Gold from scraps" best describes young art genius Lordan P. Reganion's unique works.

While everybody prays for a fine weather, Lordan, who hails from New Tambo, Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte, jokingly says typhoons give him the needed materials for his art. "Everybody prays for typhoons not to hit us, but I may be the only one who is happy when one hits inland," he said in jest as this promising artist uses driftwoods in creating magnificent home decors in all forms and sizes. You name it, he can make it, that's how talented he is.

Such talent will go to waste if not exposed and recognized as was Lordan's problem. Due to poor market exposure of his products, he had a hard time penetrating bigger markets and making both ends meet for his family, but his love for his craft prevailed over the thought of leaving what he loved doing.

"There were times when I can no longer depend on my income but still I didn't give up," he said.

But things turned for the better with DTI's assistance. He expanded his market with the help of the agency through trade fairs and product development programs; one, in particular, was the Zamboanga Peninsula Exposition or ZAMPEX in 2014 and 2015 where institutional buyers were struck in awe with his unique and intricate works.

"I thank DTI for their help in exposing me through these trade fairs," he said in an interview.





Aside from the local trade fairs, DTI also assisted him in joining national trade fairs. One of his most notable participation was at the National Trade Fair of 2014 where he started to establish a name for himself in the national market.

In December 2015, Lordan was also chosen to join in a benchmarking activity in Cebu City together with other handicraft makers from his province. This was to help them understand the diversity of handicraft industry in the country and inspire them to further develop their products.

Today, his works are displayed not just in local souvenir shops but also in the big cities such as Metro Cebu particularly in District 32, a souvenir shop located in the Cebu-Mactan International Airport. "I really want to create a niche in the market and to develop a regular following so that someday, I can train youth to help me in the production and at the same time I can generate jobs," he said.

His works are also displayed at the provincial museum of Zamboanga del Norte. This accomplishment may not be that great as compared with the works of named artists but for him, it is already a milestone and he hopes to promote his artworks not just in the country but also abroad.



Discouraging remarks fueled rather than doused the fire of this abaca planter

The fruits of abaca

by Jo Nico B. Locson



If you had planted bananas, you could now be enjoying its fruits.” These were the usual comments Joel L. Palomares heard from people passing through his half-hectare abaca farm in Poblacion, Josefina, Zamboanga del Sur. He recalled how difficult it was to convince people about the profitability of abaca, a non-fruit bearing tree unlike bananas, back when he started farming in 2011. “If they can’t see you make money, they won’t believe you,” he lamented.

But whatever obstacle there may be, he believed that nothing can stop a man from wanting to improve his life and the good well-being of his family. With hard work and determination, he and six other individuals initially formed an association of farmers and strippers in 2012 and slowly gained more members. In 2014, they formally organized themselves as the Josefina Abaca Strippers Association (JASA). Under the leadership of Palomares, JASA emerged as a leading strippers association of the abaca industry in Zamboanga del Sur.

However, as they expanded their abaca stripping activities to neighboring municipalities, they realized that manual stripping of abaca is a tiresome job – it took too much time, it needed more laborers and was not financially rewarding. Some members became discouraged with the situation and at some point, thought of quitting for good. It prompted the association to look for alternative methods to boost their productivity through a hastened stripping process by applying for the Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program of DTI.

On August 2014, their collective determination bore fruit with the implementation of the Josefina Abaca Processing Shared Service Facility. The Program provided JASA three units of mobile abaca stripping machines along with a solar dryer.

With the SSF Program, JASA’s stripping activities underwent a dramatic change – from the previous eight kilograms of abaca fibers per day, it grew by leaps and bounds to a stunning 200-230 kilograms of stripped abaca daily or a 300-400 percent increase in production volume. The drying process also sped-up remarkably from the previous eight to two hours. These resulted in a faster process, less workload, and bigger income for the members which encouraged non-members to join, or to start their own abaca farms.

Today, JASA has almost 50 members dedicated to stripping. It serves as far as Don Victoriano Chiongbian, Misamis Occidental in the north and Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur in the south.

In Palomares’ words, “Blessings come to those who work hard and persevere.” The fruit of their labor did not only make a livelihood in Josefina available in the community, it also encouraged more individuals to join the industry. Improvements in the industry mean more jobs for the locals and greater opportunities in the future. For Palomares and JASA members, those are the real fruits of abaca.

An agriculturist produces nutrition-laden meals for children

Business gets boost from a conglomeration of government assistance

by Michael Vincent D. Cajulao and Jayson Jao

Photographer: Jayson Jao



“The greatest success for me is seeing children use my products,” Conrado Bolusan, owner of Nutri-Booster Foods Philippines based in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, said.

After his retirement in 1992, having served for 17 years with the Department of Agriculture and three years at the Agricultural Training Institute in Zamboanga del Sur provincial office, Bolusan ventured into entrepreneurship by starting the Nutri-Booster Foods Philippines with Nutri-Booster Cereal, a protein-energy rich food for children from six months and older, as his main product.

By combining rice, mungbean, sesame, and soybean, Bolusan found the right formula in making a cereal rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals.

But, as in any other businesses, Bolusan soon found out that the steep

climb to success was full of trials, from logistics to institutional support, to promotion and marketing of his product.

The venture hit rock bottom in 1997 when due to high cost of rice reaching twice the original price, combined with the scarcity of local source of soybeans, he was compelled to stop producing the cereal.

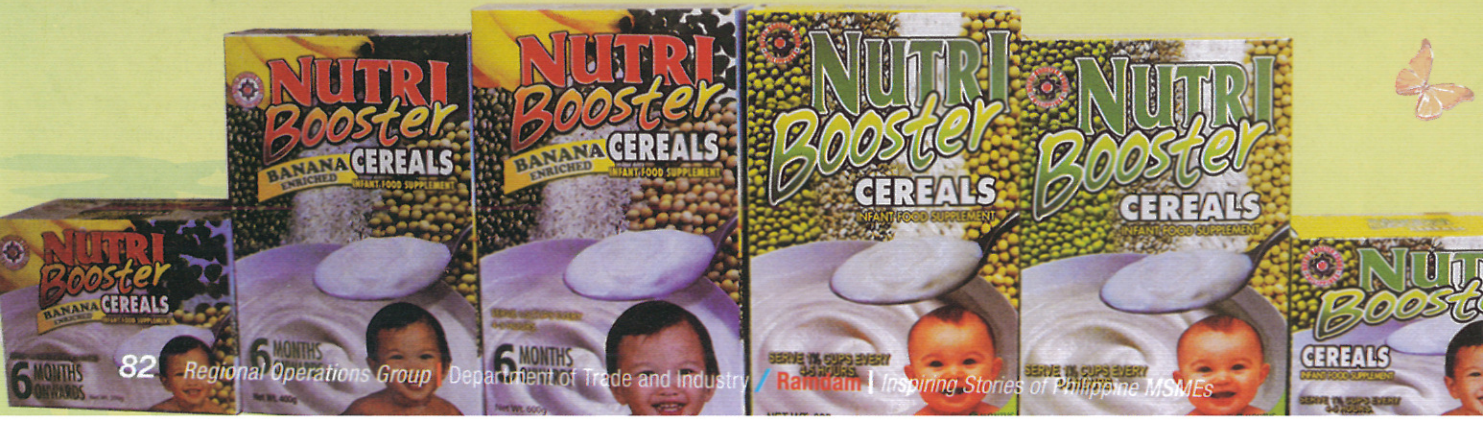
However, the temporary setback did not deter his spirit. He took a short hiatus and came back more determined to continue with his business. He searched for suppliers of raw materials to ensure the continuous operation of his business.

To have a steady and ready market, Bolusan participated in trade fairs and seminars conducted by DTI to penetrate markets as far as General Santos, Davao, and the CARAGA Region.

As his business gained momentum, the need for additional machinery was soon evident. He partnered with the Department of Science and Technology by availing of its Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program or SET-UP to increase his output, while working closely with DTI for the improvement of his product's labeling and packaging design.

As a result of all the support he received and as a testament to his dedication, the Nutri-Booster Foods Philippines was awarded the 2008 Best SME in Zamboanga del Sur and one of the best in the entire region. The rest, as they say, is history.

Bolusan is thankful for the government's intervention helping him grow his business through all these years, boosting its way to success.



Small capital, huge risks, bold strategy

From trading to manufacturing

by Michael Vincent D. Cajulao and John Edgar Macapas
Photographer: John Edgar Macapas



Six months before GASO Foods was formally established, Lemuel and Jocelyn Gaso were into fresh fish trading in Dipolog City. The regular customers were producers of bottled sardines in the locality. Most buyers paid cash, others on credit.

One day, while consolidating some unpaid accounts, the couple talked about the possibility of producing their own bottled sardines instead of just waiting for payments from their creditors. Just like other entrepreneurs, they took the risk and decided to test the waters, initially producing only two tubs of *tamban* (sardines).

"It was really a huge risk, and with our small capital, failing was not an option," Jocelyn, a nurse by profession, recounted. "Unlike other business people who had enough resources, we could not afford to just shrug off losses."

To set them apart, they embarked on a bold strategy, introducing an affordable bottled sardines aimed at health-conscious consumers. Their unique selling point was well received.

GASO Foods wanted to venture into massive production but were hindered by limited financial resources, limited skills and technical know-how, market competition, and lack of information in obtaining a license to operate from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA).

Seeking the help of government agencies, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) helped them upgrade their facilities with the DTI providing a thermal heat shrink sealing machine through the Shared Service Facilities (SSF) program. They also participated in various training and seminars on good manufacturing practices, food handling safety, and trade fairs like ZAMPEX (Zamboanga Peninsula Exposition) in 2014 and 2015.

From the traditional way of cooking utilizing used tin "baril" (drum) and firewood confined in less than ten-square meter processing area, the couple moved their facilities to a bigger and more modern processing plant after two years of operations.

"We are very grateful to God for guiding and directing us to go to the right agencies to help us," Jocelyn stated. "And we really appreciate all the help from DTI and DOST."

With its remarkable growth, GASO Foods was awarded the SME Elite Star Awards during the MSME Conference held July 2015 in Zamboanga City for micro, small, and medium enterprises. Currently, the company is serving 17 Robinsons branches, 20 Prince Warehouse branches, and selected stores in the province. It is also the flag-bearer of Dapitan City for Spanish style bottled sardines, the only company with an FDA license to operate in the city.

Inspired by her daughters, she turned loss into a win The housewife who was determined to be an entrepreneur

by Carlo Zion Mabale-Gonzales
Photographer: Carlo Zion Mabale-Gonzales



When her husband suffered from hyperacidity, Lucila Vazquez formulated a soy drink especially for him. The mixture, named *Soy Kapitan*, eventually became the principal merchandise offered by Jocel Star Food (JSF) Products, a company she put up in Salipyasín, Kabasalan, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Then a plain housewife, Lucila wanted to contribute financially to her family's well-being and future. "Lord, please do not let seven years of being a working student end in nothing," Lucila prayed. "Please give me something to do, help me build something for my children."

Build a business from the ground up she eventually did. Initially, she did the mixing herself, manually. Although lacking in resources, she was determined to succeed. The DTI assisted her in registering her business name and acquiring a license to operate from

the Food and Drugs Administration, along with a barcode or GS1, and certification from the Intellectual Property Office. She obtained pulverizing machines from the Department of Agriculture and a mixer from the Department of Science and Technology.

Lucila worked hard for her product to be recognized. She attended trade fairs just to penetrate commercial giants such as Gaisano Capitals in Mindanao, other major malls, and retail stores in Zamboanga Peninsula. She also obtained recommendations and endorsements of her products from medical doctors in Zamboanga Sibugay.

One night in July 2015, her facility was burglarized, and the fruits of 10 years of operations and the success of her Soy Kapitan powdered drink all vanished in the dark. The family was traumatized, particularly her youngest daughter.

Lucila felt helpless, robbed not just of money but also of her will to

move on. She even considered selling her business interest. Dispirited and frustrated, her mind was still in a daze until her youngest daughter asked her if she could still go to school without Soy Kapitan. That was her wake up call.

On the invitation of DTI, Lucila participated in the 2015 Zamboanga Peninsula Exposition. She has since recovered from her losses and moved to re-establish her business in Zamboanga Peninsula's biggest mall, the KCC Mall de Zamboanga.

Months later, Lucila relocated her business to Kabasalan with enough resources to establish another small factory. Looking at the hollow-blocks and steel rods used to lay the foundation of her new factory, she exclaimed: "My daughters and my daughters' children will inherit all this. I'm happy and fortunate that DTI never gave up on me."

For people in poverty, every peso counts

Bringing great market deals to the hinterlands

by Michael Vincent D. Cajulao
Photographer: Michael Vincent D. Cajulao



In places where market day usually happens just once a week, and the Poblacion where it usually happens is hours away, buying provisions becomes a major and invariably expensive undertaking. Every peso counts when finances are strained, particularly when one's budget is stretched to its limits. Getting the biggest bang for every buck is a very gratifying accomplishment.

More value for money is what happened when the Mobile *Diskwento* Caravan was conducted in Zamboanga Peninsula from May 11-17, 2015. It was a very welcome and refreshing change for the intended beneficiaries.

"This *Diskwento* Caravan gave us big savings," Gelita Mirabueno, one of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program or 4Ps beneficiaries from the mountainous area of Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte, said with glee as she bought a few pieces of canned sardines, instant noodles, and school supplies. "How I wish we can have this kind of project more often."

The caravan could not have come at a better time for Gelita who just received her family's monthly stipend from the local Social Welfare office. She was about to go to the *tiangge* (market) to buy some goods when the DTI caravan arrived.

"I can use my savings for other pressing needs," Gelita proudly said, showing a school bag. "This bag is being sold in our local market at PHP400.00. I bought this for only PHP150.00, saving me PHP250.00."

In the western barangay of Labuan, Zamboanga City, Vivian Canag, a housewife, said, "This is really a big help for us in terms of savings. Going to the city proper would cost one person PHP100 on fare alone. And it's really tiresome to go there to buy the needs of our children now that school opening is near." Vivian is one of the hundreds of consumers served in the area.

Labuan Barangay Councilor Jawadi Sarail thanked DTI for bringing the project to their area for the poor to have access to cheaper prices. "We thank DTI for choosing our barangay for the program. This is a very good project because it is aimed at helping the indigents. Indeed, this project is for the poor," Sarail said.

The DTI's *Diskwento* Caravan went on to serve two more areas: Siay in Zamboanga Sibugay, and Sominot in Zamboanga del Sur. In total, the Mobile *Diskwento* Caravan served over 2,000 happy individuals.

Individual pond owners rise from traditional farming to a strengthened collective of fish processors

Success comes with a scrumptious crunch

by Laurence D. Pradia



Photos: Hineleban Foundation, Inc. (HFI), DTI-Bukidnon Provincial Office



Rural life can sometimes be droning particularly to farmers who have been engaged in the same farming practices over the years. For most of them, wisdom is anchored on prudence. While awed by the conveniences and trappings of a fast-paced lifestyle, they would rather take it slow appreciating the promise of progress with suspicion and reticence. Such as when traditional farmers are compelled to adopt technological innovations.

Sitio Linabo, Lalawan, Malaybalay City is a classic example of a traditional community slowly awakening to advanced methodologies and systems, transitioning from individual pond owners to a strengthened collective of tilapia processors. Now organized into Linabo Agrarian Reform Cooperative (LARC), members assembled themselves to grow, not just a step higher but a milestone greater.

The churning of the tide began in 2012 when the Department of Agrarian Reform – Catholic Relief Services (DAR-CRS) introduced dried tilapia also known

as “tilapia crunch,” to LARC fishpond owners. It was a novelty inspired by the celebrated *danggit*, a dried fish bestseller – but more affordable.

The marketing strategy targeted low-income families but the more affluent households caught on and placed orders not just for their personal consumption but as gifts. LARC members were confronted with an amusing problem: demand overwhelmed production capacity.

Lacking a centralized and equipped processing area, member-producers did whatever they could to fast-track production, processing tilapia wherever water was available and risking possible contamination. LARC processing in-charge Flor Cordero lamented that this practice went on unchecked because of the need to meet market demands and with the earnings coming in, they could not afford to stop.

In the midst of a financially rewarding production chaos, they summoned various government agencies and instrumentalities. DTI was one of the first to respond, providing

expert advice to resolve their struggle for productivity and establishing of safety standards.

Through the Shared Service Facility Project, a Tilapia Crunch Processing Facility worth PHP81,000 was established in April 2014. This provided the much-needed equipment such as a freezer, impulse sealer, and stainless steel working table. A training on tilapia crunch processing was also conducted to further hone their skills and ensure stricter standards were observed.

In 2014, DAR paved the way for further development with a building worth PHP250,000 where tilapia crunch is now being processed. To ensure safe, quality products, DTI conducted a seminar for 12 member-processors on good manufacturing practices in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology.

Along with other support agencies, DTI continuously provides technical and business advisory services to the growing group of 97 farmers, as they sustainably uphold growth and development in their organization.



Success is inevitable for these united industry stakeholders

Coffee berries transform Bukidnon's landscape

by Laurence D. Pradia

The Province of Bukidnon used to be the coffee capital of the Philippines. Sadly, coffee prices dissolved in a murky mess, and farmers were compelled to diversify.

Bukidnon's coffee industry hit rock bottom, from principal product it was consigned to the backyard as a convenient pick-me-up limited in scale to family consumption.

"When the price of coffee fell, we had to cut our coffee trees so that we could plant corn," recalls Anecita Lumigoy. "Coffee trading could no longer sustain our family's daily needs."

Fortunately, things are looking up, and the prospect of once again becoming a major coffee producer is slowly becoming a reality. DTI is helping revive Bukidnon's coffee industry with the adoption of Industry Clustering as a development strategy.

In 2010, DTI-Bukidnon, in collaboration with other business development service providers, implemented initiatives that led to the inclusion of the coffee industry in the Three-Year National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Roving Academy (SMERA) introduced coffee farming as a business to remote communities through an investment



opportunity seminar. Robert Ansaldo, president of the Rocky Mountain Arabica Coffee Company encouraged participants to treat coffee farming as a business rather than a backyard crop.

With farmers encouraged to go into coffee production again, DTI assisted them further with five Shared Service Facility (SSF) Projects worth PHP7.5 million. Coffee processors also received assistance such as development of label designs and packaging to help in marketing the products.

As a result, more coffee processors came out and produced brands such as: IMDALSA Coffee, produced by agrarian reform beneficiaries; Kape Maramag and Kape Napalit, products of women's organizations; and, Kape Roger, product of passion from Malitbog. In 2015, 12 more farmer-organizations engaged in coffee production were served by DTI, with over a thousand farmer-beneficiaries generating PHP25.82 million in sales and PHP1.2 million in investments. In the first three months of 2016, the industry kicked-off with



PHP4.6 million sales with plans of rolling-out for continued success.

As the industry reaches new heights, DTI encouraged coffee growers and processors to create specialty coffee. In training the trainers, four foreign coffee experts, affiliates of the Specialty Coffee Association of America trained over 40 Bukidnon coffee

farmers and transformed and certified them as trainers for agricultural coffee production and post-harvest handling and processing.



Kaamulan: The gathering of the seven tribes of Bukidnon Mindanao's food basket goes to the mall

by Laurence D. Pradia



You can practically find everything in a mall. Beyond shopping, the mall has become a place to see and be seen, and is the most popular chill-out joint anytime day and night. On Sundays, families hear mass, dine, be entertained, relax, do necessary stuff such as laundry, get shoes repaired and shined, even get a medical check-up. Things obligatory, essential, indispensable, above and beyond the basics, can be found in the mall.

When the Seven Tribes of Bukidnon gathered in a mall, the event was dubbed "A Glimpse of Kaamulan at SM CdeO" a month-long event organized by the Provincial Government of Bukidnon through its Tourism Office and DTI, in cooperation with the management of SM City Cagayan de Oro. The event marked the first time that the 42-year old festival was staged outside Bukidnon.

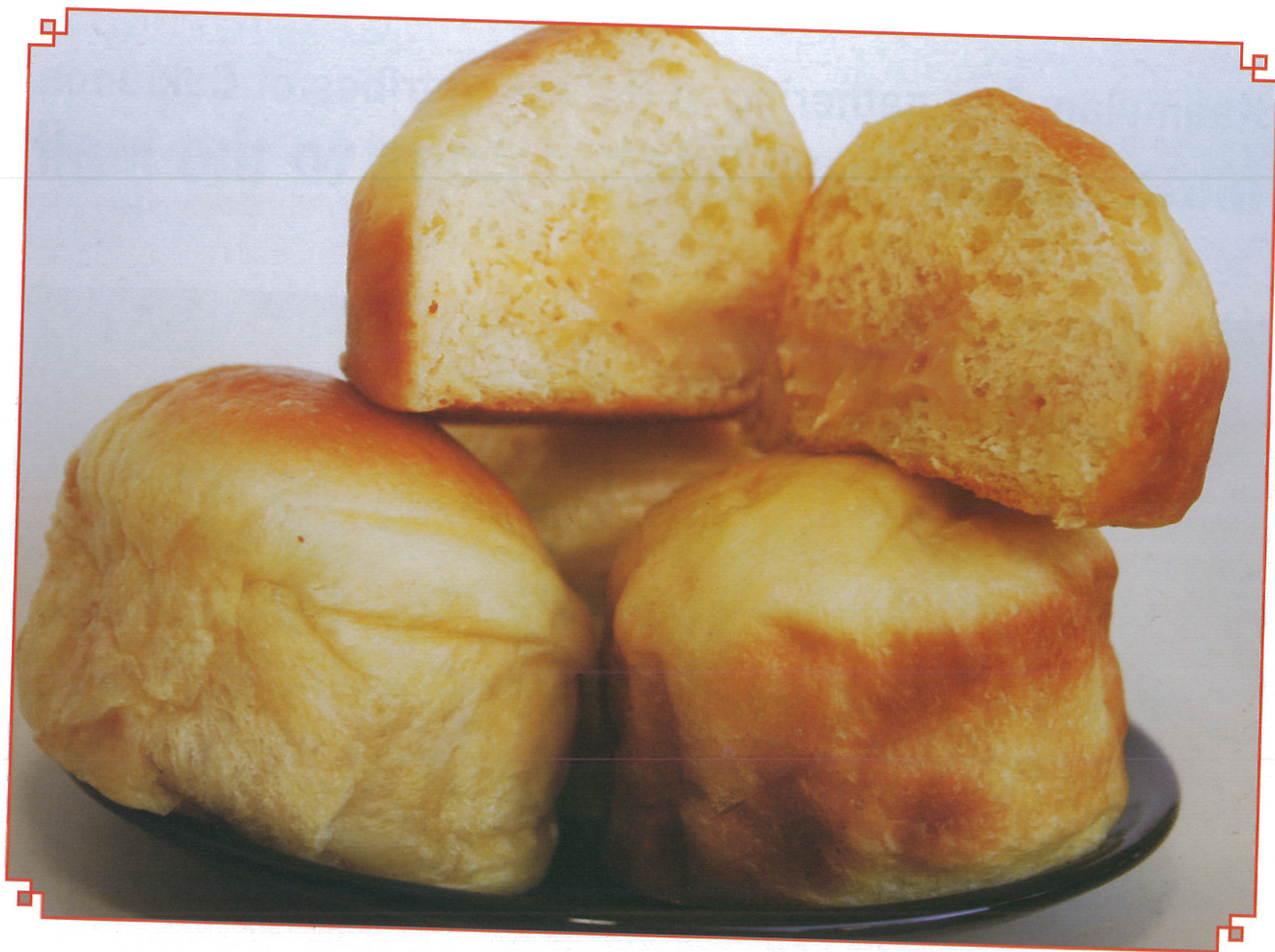
Introducing Bukidnon's products to a bigger market, the highlight of the event was a five-day product exhibit featuring Bukidnon's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in March 2015. The event generated PHP352,000 gross sales from what is dubbed as the Food Basket of Mindanao.

The trade fair successfully brought in various products of 32 enterprises such as fresh and processed foods, coffee and cacao products, peanut products, wood and bamboo crafts, bead works and art works, abaca, and organic products – all displayed in the stalls specifically devoted for the province's MSMEs.

One of the exhibitors was Alomah's Place, producer of fresh organic vegetables that earned the highest sales amounting to PHP129,000. Owner Benjohn Mahistrado was very appreciative for the opportunity to participate and introduce their emerging products to a bigger market.

While putting Bukidnon's products in the spotlight, the trade fair also boosted the province's dynamic tourism industry by showcasing its rich culture and traditions as manifested in the dances of the seven tribes of Bukidnon performed during the opening ceremonies.





Success begins with a winning product **CAMIGUIN'S DELICIOUS PASTEL**

by Zita M. Abellare

In over a nine-year period from 1980, Virgilio Jose and Eleanor Popera engaged in several business endeavors that were consistently short-lived and losing. But the string of failures did not discourage the couple, instead it fuelled their desire to do more to achieve that elusive success. As most Filipinos would usually say, tongue in cheek: charge to experience.

Before the year 1989 ended, they saw another opportunity. Eleanor went into pastel making which would eventually become her signature product. On January 8, 1990, Vjandep (for Virgilio Jose and Eleanor Popera) was born. With an initial capitalization of only PHP120.00, she went into it fulltime with a relative as her helping hand.

After several months of steady but low scale operations, the demand rose

rapidly. Net income rose from PHP100 to PHP300 daily, reaching a high of PHP2,500 a day. With an opportunity to grow the business even more, DTI granted Eleanor a loan of PHP25,000 for a period of one year payable at two percent per month.

In 2009, the couple was able to obtain a loan of PHP20 million from DTI and the Development Bank of the Philippines' One-Town One-Product credit facility for micro, small and medium enterprises. From their previous businesses that opened and closed, they now have a multi-million peso building.

With the old oven having been replaced with state-of-the art baking equipment, their capacity to deliver products expanded exponentially along with a large domestic market. They now have hundreds of stores in malls and

supermarkets with institutional buyers from all over the country. From the PHP120 initial capital, Vjandep now has a capitalization of over PHP50 million. The staff of two grew to over 200 people who all enjoy full employment benefits.

Vjandep's management prioritizes the physical, mental, and spiritual well being of their employees by engaging them in regular sports activities, group worship, and daily morning prayer prior to daily operations.

As an industry leader in Camiguin's processed food industry cluster, Vjandep enjoys the Shared Service Facility of Food Processing Equipment provided by DTI in 2013. Today, they also serve as a distributor and consolidator of Camiguin products.

15 enterprising housewives create a delectable recipe

Linamon's Best: Creamiest *buko* pie

by Ma. Welissa V. Domingo
Photographer: Geoffrey Paran



A group of intrepid women has managed to put their hometown, Linamon, on the map through the distinct flavor of their *buko* (coconut) pie.

Since coco-based product is the identified One-Town One-Product of Linamon, it has prioritized the development of *buko* pie as a banner product of the locality. But progress was slow at the onset owing to the lack of entrepreneurs willing to invest in producing *buko* pie on a commercial scale. This prompted the local government to collaborate with various government agencies to provide a food processing center where they could develop an organization which could eventually go into *buko* pie production.

After the establishment of the center, the Magoong Samburon RIC Food Processing Association (MSRICFA) was chosen to start the *buko* pie industry in the municipality. Initially, the group was comprised of 15 enterprising housewives whose aim was to augment their family income through food processing business. *Buko* pie was not their intended main product but after

attending the training organized by DTI on *buko* pie enhancement, they became interested with the product so much so that they began to create a recipe that would uniquely distinguish from dozens of *buko* pies currently in the market.

Starting with PHP84,000 working capital, the group's initial production only targeted local residents of the municipality and to cater snacks to visitors of the local government. The association's efforts paved the way for local and national government agencies to help get its business underway. Despite the limited market, word spread of the delectable delicacy that has sprung from Linamon. Those who had tasted the group's *buko* pie attest that it lives true to its promise of being "tasty and creamy to the last bite." Soon, several institutional buyers like restaurants, national government agencies, and even orders from neighboring cities of Ozamis and Marawi came in.

Increasing demand needed increased production. Thus, DTI's Shared Service Facility Project came at

an opportune time for the association. The group was allowed the use of a gas-operated oven, stainless dough kneader, chillers, stainless working table, stainless dough cutter, and stainless display rack. With the addition of this new equipment, production volume increased from 300 to 2,500 layers of pie per month while sales soared from a monthly of PHP48,000 to PHP400,000. To date, the association has now two outlets in Iligan City, at Tita Fannies and El Centro, and a display area in Linamon.

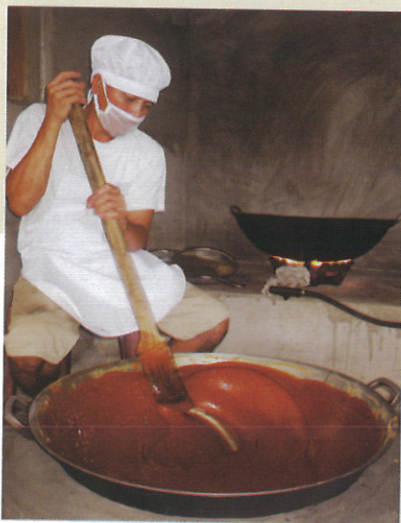
"Thank you so much DTI. We are extremely delighted because the production process has become more efficient especially in dough mixing. We will also strive harder to continuously improve our product and bring more benefits to our group members," said Baltazara Calunod, president of MSRICFA.



The sweet life of coco farmers

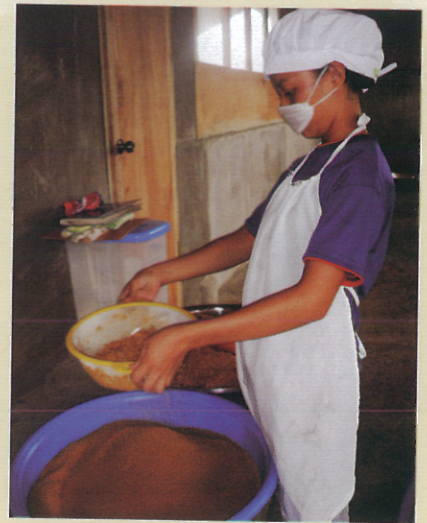
Coco sugar business liberates farmers from conventional farming

by Jason B. Montecañas



With an abundance of raw materials and a passionate set of leaders, the Department of Agrarian Reform took notice and the cooperative was chosen as the recipient of its Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) for Coconut Sugar Production.

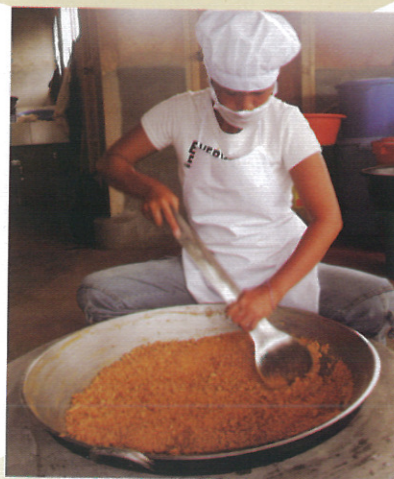
The operations of LAMPCO have since generated livelihood opportunities for 59 individuals from only three workers at the start of operations. After six years in the business, there are now 28 workers employed in production, 16 coco sap gatherers, three cooks, and seven members of the Board of Directors with five management officers.



In the village of Linabu, Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, coconut not only provides food; it also nurtures the dreams of farmers for a more prosperous life. Since the Linabu Agrarian Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LAMPCO), an agrarian reform community based enterprise, started producing coco sugar in 2009, earnings have been on the rise. Currently, the cooperative has 320 members consisting of farmers and coconut processors.

In August of 2009, members began producing coco sugar, a financially successful venture that received orders from institutional buyers in volumes that exceeded their processing plant's capacity.

Originally engaged in micro financing, the organization experienced challenges from several fronts: financial and management problems on one hand, and low collection efficiencies and defaulted payment dues on the other. The challenges notwithstanding, the leaders of the group were determined to succeed.



Thanks to DTI-Misamis Oriental, the year 2015 was a banner year for LAMPCO, earning the singular distinction as Best Shared Service Facility (SSF) with the "Most Ramdam Effect" at the National level.

This year marks the beginning of a partnership between *Negosyong Pinoy* and LAMPCO. *Negosyong Pinoy* provides the cooperative with funds to expand its coco sugar production. This enables

the cooperative to meet the demands of buyers and generates more income and employment opportunities for the residents of Linabu.

"With this development, current employment, both for the processing site and farm level will be doubled," said Margie Pejoro, manager of LAMPCO. "This will greatly help the community as it provides a monthly income for farmers, primary and often sole breadwinners, who usually earn just twice to four times a year from conventional coconut farming."

The project freed the farmers of Linabu from the overwhelming burden of subsistence living. It has provided livelihood for farmers but also offers a healthier, sweet life for the consumers.



Creating niches in the field of health and wellness

The Coco King's son also rises

by Patrick Kim B. Evangelio
Photographer: Patrick Kim B. Evangelio



A typical Filipino saying “*Kung ano ang puno ay siyang bunga* (What the tree is so is its fruit.),” best applies to the father and son entrepreneurs – Rudy and Alvin Ang – of Pantukan, Compostela Valley.

Rudy, who built the King Real Soap Manufacturing, has an heir to his enterprising passion. His son, Alvin, is turning out to be a maverick entrepreneur himself with his own business.

Rudy started his business in 1993, the year when the soap-making technology was jointly introduced by DTI and the Department of Science and Technology as a livelihood project for women. Pantukan, being a coastal town devoted to coconut and copra production, then became one of the pilot areas.

With an initial capitalization of PHP20,000, Rudy, together with his wife Irene, and a helper, began producing blue laundry bars, but it would take them two years of research and client consultation before the right formula of Real laundry soap was perfected.

After finding their niche in the market, King Real diversified its products among which was Joyce beauty soap, made from honey, fresh cow's milk, papaya, and virgin coconut oil (VCO). The VCO is sourced from Cocolife Cooperative, one of the biggest producers of VCO in Davao Region.

Meanwhile, Alvin admits that it was his father who inspired him to start his own business, something that's not surprising at all since, at a very young age, he already saw his father's passion and determination to succeed in their soap manufacturing venture.

Before Alvin opened his own business, he had worked in a hospital as a registered nurse, a course he took to please his mother. Soon, he knew his heart was not into it and quit.

Using his savings as an initial capital, he put up his own enterprise of producing soap with VCO as the main ingredient. He borrowed an extra capital from his parents when he saw there was a niche for organic personal care and spa products, including perfumes.

On May 2011, he launched the H&W Ventures, with H and W standing for health and wellness. With the help of DTI, he registered H&W Organica, which signalled the start of his booming venture. His products were meant not only for cleanliness but also to emphasize the use of organic ingredients since other soap products were basically made of



chemicals. His main ingredient is VCO, now known as a cure-all for diseases and used for wellness.

By participating in DTI-initiated trade fairs, apart from being a beneficiary of product development initiatives and of training and seminars, Alvin was able to gain the trust of buyers that soon, his market included overseas buyers.

In 2016, he joined the Brunei International Trade and Consumer Exhibition, Mindanao Trade Exhibit, and Manila Fame 2016 where his products got great exposure.

H&W Organica VCO beauty soaps come in different “flavors:” chocolate, goat milk, and seaweed. Among these beauty soaps, the chocolate flavored dubbed as tsokolate soap is the best seller. For the chocolate, he mixes the VCO soap with cocoa liquor or what is commonly called tablea, the source of cocoa butter. He said most customers are intrigued with its aroma and find it unique since it is new in the market.

While his existing products clicked to specific market segments, Alvin



Ang continues to introduce innovative products to reach out to untapped sectors of the market. Apart from the usual VCO soap, H&W Organica offers a lot of innovations like black soap with tea tree oil, coffee soap, and beer soap.

The beer soap created a stir among consumers during its introduction in 2013. His latest innovation is getting much attention from local and foreign consumers alike. In fact, leading beer maker San Miguel Beer Corporation bought volumes of beer soap to be given away as gifts to its employees. Hops,

an ingredient found in beer, is known for its relaxing properties and its skin softening amino acids. Hops contain polyphenols known for its anti-bacterial and preservative effects.

But what makes his products different from those available in the market is that he uses premium quality VCO and that the raw materials' natural properties have been preserved. H&W gets a supply of premium grade of VCO from Cocolife Cooperative, which his father heads and is one of the shareholders.



Coffee^{FOR} Peace

*Not just another coffee.
It's **JUST** coffee!*

Farmers. Environment. Peace-Building.

Kapeyapaan – Coffee for Peace

by Patrick Kim B. Evangelio

Photographer: Patrick Kim B. Evangelio



As it advocates for peace and reconciliation in high-conflict areas in Mindanao, Peace Builders, an NGO forerunner, realized that peace could not be achieved on an empty stomach. The advocates also observed that during interactions with highland communities, peaceful discussions have been cordial while drinking home-grown coffee. The NGO realized that coffee is not only an essential element of socialization but could bring better economic opportunities to them.

“As we get deeply immersed in divided communities because of unresolved conflicts, the more we become aware of the need for inclusive economic development as a critical aspect of our peace and reconciliation ministry,” stated Joji Pantoja, CEO of Coffee for Peace Inc.

And so Coffee for Peace Inc. was born in 2008 to “brew” peace. Believing that there had to be sustainable economic solutions that co-exist with peace work, Coffee for Peace empowered coffee farmers and indigenous peoples by providing seedlings and technical assistance, encouraging them to maximize productivity while protecting the environment.

Coffee for Peace buys coffee beans and mentors farmers on quality control. The farmers, 80 percent of whom are women, are paid a fair price and trained in production and post-harvest processing.

Now supplying world class Arabica green coffee beans and unroasted beans to Canada and the US, the organization also serves quality roasted coffee beans at their cafe in Matina, Davao City. It also supplies coffee shops in Davao, Manila, Quezon City, Cotabato, and L'Organique Online Shop.



Coffee for Peace now exports in 'micro-lots'—smaller quantities of specific beans with an exquisite taste to Ten Thousand Villages, one of the world's largest fair trade organizations and a founding member of the World Fair Trade Organization. The organization is expanding its operations in Mindanao and Luzon, particularly Kalinga. They developed 'Kapeyapaan' (a pun on the Tagalog words for coffee and peace) for its premium Robusta Coffee.

DTI and other agencies and organizations supported the efforts of Coffee for Peace, whose products gained market access through SIAL-ASEAN Trade Exhibit, Coffee Origins Trade Fair, among others.

The Coffee for Peace's unique, triple-bottom line formula to brew peace: farmers, environment, and peace-building, won awards from the United Nations Development Program and IIX Awardee in 2015 Social Enterprise with Peace Impact; as finalist in PWC-Isla Lipana Development Social



Enterprise Award 2015; and, recognition from the PBSP/Citibank/FSSI "BID Challenge Award 2011-Social Enterprise with 3-bottomline: people, planet, profit."



Turning a hobby into a successful business venture

A passion for fashion

by Rachel Ann T. Funtilar
 Photographer: Rachel Ann T. Funtilar



Yvette's Bags and Beads Collection started from crocheting, a hobby that Davaoeña entrepreneur Yvette Marie Celi Punzalan was passionate about. Bag hags are so smitten by the uniqueness of her creations that also offer quality and durability.

Instead of the usual yarns, her bags are made from drinking straws, unused of course, transformed into a finely crafted work of art, something that drove her friends, her first customers, bonkers. Seeing the business potential, her husband George encouraged her to go commercial, but the difficulties involved in creating the bags almost made her quit.

From a meager capital of PHP500 and a small workforce whom she trained, Yvette turned her hobby into a business venture in November 2008. After five months of perfecting the design and quality of her products, she joined a bazaar at the World Trade Center organized by TV personality Christine Bersola Babao. The warm reception she received for her products encouraged Yvette to participate in other trade shows.

Determined to promote her product and create a niche for it, Yvette joined the 13th Mindanao Trade in 2008. A representative from the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) noticed her products and invited her to join the prestigious Manila F.A.M.E. (Furnishings

and Apparel Manufacturer's Exchange) International. Yvette became a regular exhibitor there, as well as in the Mindanao Trade Expo and National Fair. She won KATHA of Manila F.A.M.E. 2011 for Innovative Bag and OTOP National Expo 2012 Most Innovative Product Award.

Realizing the export potential of her products, she joined the ASEAN-Japan Center Exhibit in 2011, Tokyo Fashion Week and Gift Show in 2012 and the Brunei International Trade and Consumer Exhibition in 2016. She penetrated the export market with a contract from Japanese buyers and now offers bags, throw pillows, carpets and chair covers in the US, Japan and Singapore. Her unique products are now displayed at Shangri-La Plaza in Metro Manila and high-end boutiques in Boracay.

With an established name and a good reputation, Yvette believes she has to remain at the cutting edge to be competitive. She now employs 150 community-based women who make basic bags, with 15 direct workers who do the finishing touches by putting the accessories and trimmings. This community-based production approach provides livelihood augmentation for housewives who helps sustain her passion for fashion.

Round, flat tablets made of ground, roasted cacao beans put San Isidro on the international map

The town that cacao built

by Judecia H. Ponio
 Photographer: Judecia H. Ponio



In the 1990s, the municipality of San Isidro in Davao del Norte did not exist. It was just part of the mountainous area bordering the neighboring towns of Kapalong and Asuncion. When the town was founded in March 2004, the primary source of income for most people was farming and one of the primary crops that abound in the area was cacao. When the price for dried cacao beans hit bottom low, many farmers went neck-high in debt.

Hope came in the form of a local *tablea* recipe perfected in the hands of *Nanay Sayong*. At a contest organized by the local government during the town's fiesta, her recipe bested all the others in the competition for the tastiest *tablea*. *Tablea* is the local term for round flat tablets made from ground roasted cacao beans. Mindful of the market potential of the product, the local government and the DTI made it the town's flagship product.

Their efforts paved the way for the creation of Chokolade de San Isidro (CSI) in 2007 that united cacao farmers, traders, investors, and household *tablea* makers, and ensured sustainability in the production of *tablea*. The organization started with a rented wooden house in the downtown area as its office and production plant. From there, it slowly carved its name in the local and international cacao industry by introducing its own brand name — *Sikwate*.



From a daily production of three kilograms, CSI now manufactures up to 180 kilograms per day. They have also been exporting cacao nibs and fermented cacao beans to Netherlands and other countries. These beans are sourced from local cacao farmers who are now enjoying a buying price of PHP100/kilo, a far cry from the PHP40/kilo before CSI was organized.

As with any other organizations, CSI had also braved various challenges and setbacks. In 2012, typhoon Pablo severely damaged its solar dryer and fermentation building. Export sales suffered as a result. However, CSI rose up again with the help of organizations that believed in them.

The Agricultural Development Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance funded the reconstruction of their production plant. The Shared Service Facilities worth PHP730,000 provided by DTI in 2014 further boosted their production enabling them to meet local and international market demands and comply with global food safety standards.

Today, cacao stakeholders in the town enjoy a stable source of income resonating to a better standard of living. San Isidro has also risen from a relatively obscure town to the second largest cacao producer and exporter in the country – a bittersweet journey that rightfully earned it the moniker “The town that cacao built.”

A business venture that rose from the wake of a storm

Hot and sweet blend of success

by Sylvia Ordiz
Photographer: Sylvia Ordiz



When Typhoon Pablo hit Davao Oriental in December 2012, many lives were lost and damage to infrastructure and crops, particularly on the people's top source of income, the coconut industry, were enormous.

At its wake, the provincial government formulated the Recovery and Building Back Better Program to, among others, develop alternative sources of livelihood, particularly in the hard-hit municipalities. For obvious reasons, coconut production cannot

be relied upon, thus, the DTI promoted hot chili production where farmers can immediately start harvesting and processing on the fourth month from planting.



Anchored on Oplan Pablo, or Program to Accelerate Building Livelihood Opportunities in Davao Oriental, hot chili production and processing became the centerpiece of DTI's assistance to the impacted farmers.

Among the new enterprises that remarkably rose in this industry is the Ayana's Siling Kinamayo, owned and managed by Edlun and Maricel Ferrando of Caraga town. It has become a major source of income, not just for the couple, but also for the farmers.

With an initial capitalization of PHP800,000, the duo was able to help 25 chili farmers from the municipality to

earn PHP70-80 a kilo for fresh chili and PHP200 a kilo for dried chili.

With DTI's intervention on marketing and promotion, training and seminars, and product development, Ayana's Siling Kinamayo is now sold in Davao City, Manila, Cotabato City, Cagayan de Oro City, and other key cities, and to foreign buyers in Indonesia and the United States.

The Ferrando couple revealed that the products generate sales of up to PHP500,000 whenever they join trade fairs.

Having imbibed the culture of entrepreneurship by heart, Mr. Ferrando was proclaimed winner of the 2015

Armed Forces Police Savings Loan Association's National Search for Outstanding Entrepreneur receiving a cash prize of PHP100,000.

The husband and wife tandem, who can be regarded as an epitome of an enterprise with a heart in running the business, are not only working hard to make Ayana's Siling Kinamayo big for their own benefit, but also for the welfare of their farmer-suppliers, their most important partners in the business.

The cool business of hot chili production Hope after the storm

by Sylvia Ordiz
Photographer: Sylvia Ordiz



 rganized under the leadership of Luis C. Bueno, Jr, the MAMA Chili, Tree Farmers Association of Sitio Lucasan, Malibago, Cateel is composed of more than 150 farmers with a common vision of farming high-value agricultural crops. MAMA stands for Malibago, Aliwagwag, Maglahus, and Aragon, barangays of Cateel town.

Even before the disastrous typhoon Pablo hit the municipalities of Baganga, Cateel, and Boston in December 2012, Bueno had begun to distribute chili seeds to member-farmers to plant. Chili is simple to plant and fetches a good price in the market. After the storm, however, it was only



Bonifacio Ebrano who was lucky enough to see some of his chili seeds germinate and grow amidst the ruins of his house.

At the wake of the storm, government agencies, local and foreign NGOs, and the private sector rallied in support for the provincial government's Recovery and Building Back Better Programs to help those who were impacted by the storm. One of these organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, extended assistance to the MAMA Chili group in the form of hybrid chili seeds.

The DTI, which had been assisting the chili industry even before the typhoon hit, identified the MAMA Chili



farmers as beneficiaries under its Hot Pablo Program. A series of technical assistance on business development for the hot chili industry were undertaken: product quality improvement, packaging and labeling, product promotion and marketing, and other entrepreneurial and productivity training and seminars.

One of the highlights of the assistance on product promotion and marketing was the regular participation of the group and the Bueno-owned El Tigre enterprise in different trade fairs and exhibits all over the country. Among these is the National Food Fair in March 2014 at the SMX MOA in Pasay City where Bueno was able to establish linkages with institutional buyers for chili paste, chili extract, chili powder, and fresh and dried chili.

The association's regular participation in regional trade fairs held at the Abreeza Mall and the SMX Lanang, Davao City resulted in a more intensive product promotion. The group opted to rent a booth at the Abreeza



Mall, Davao City for PHP45,000 a month and invested on halal certification to upgrade their product. Participation in trade fairs and exhibits hosted by the Department of Agriculture in Manila in 2015 resulted in considerable marketing contracts inked with institutional buyers.

With an average monthly sales PHP120,000, it is expected that the

chili farmers will generate more sales from fresh and dried chili products. At present, Bueno is the market consolidator for all the chili produce of the farmers of their association.

The association's success is also a result of the convergence of efforts of the DTI, the provincial government, the municipal government of Cateel, the Department of Science and Technology, and the DA which provided one unit plastic drum, 20 units mobile chili dryers, and plastic film for mulching.

The project had a positive and encompassing impact in the area generating employment for the farmers as well as other residents in the four barangays. The MAMA Chili farmers are now engaged in product diversification extending to the production of taro chips, banana chips, and turmeric powder further increasing the income of the farmer-members.

Luis C. Bueno Jr., president of the association, is the Gawad Saka nominee of Davao Oriental for the region in 2016.

Works of art from indigenous communities

Handicrafts that are the pride of the tribe

by Maria Victoria R. Placer and Meriam M. Sarabillo
 Photographers: Maria Victoria R. Placer and Meriam M. Sarabillo



The town of Kiblawan in Davao del Sur is home to an indigenous people's community engaged in the production of abaca fabric weaving, bead working for fashion accessories, basketry, bamboo furniture, novelty items as well as wearables in traditional designs that showcase their creative skills.

Initially organized by the DeMolay Foundation in 2001, the Tribal Handicraft Makers Association did not exist for long and unfortunately ceased operations altogether. But the members were undaunted. They registered the organization with the Department of Labor and Employment and supported the town's tourism efforts by once again producing handicrafts that it has been known for. The association was managed by its officers and supervised by local government-appointed staff to ensure sustainability of the program.

DTI provided various programs to the association such as trainings and seminars, products development, and a



as a whole.

Through the years, the Tribal Handicrafts Makers Association continued to improve their products, and with support from government agencies, they promoted them in various trade fairs within Davao del Sur, Davao City, and Manila F.A.M.E. where they demonstrated their skills in weaving the famous "tinalak" and shawl to the delight of the audience.

The continued success of the Tribal Handicrafts Makers Association is a collective effort of its members with the support of government agencies, the DTI, and the local government of Kiblawan.

Shared Service Facility (SSF) Project on Integrated Handicraft Facilities. Barangays were also organized to tend to their tribal group who are also members of the association. This is to ensure that all weavers and members contribute to the success and sustainability not only of the project but of the organization

Sharing success with the community

The sweet taste of coco syrup-laced success

by Jenny Grace M. Mendoza
 Photographer: Jenny Grace M. Mendoza



Time was when coconut farming meant copra production. For Benjamin R. Lao of Lao Integrated Farms, Inc. in Eman, Bansalan, Davao del Sur, there are more profitable coconut by-products. In 1998, Benjamin worked on his five-hectare inheritance and, in 2006, with eight employees and help from DTI, Department of Science and Technology, and Philippine Coconut Authority, he ventured into production of coco sugar, coco honey, and coco sap drink from coco toddy (*tubâ*), which were the first in Davao Region.



With the growing demand for his products in the US, Benjamin hired more workers, reaching a total of 35 by 2010. His market grew, with orders from Australia, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

Drought hit in February 2016, reducing the volume of raw materials and impeding the company's ability to meet demands. They ran at 60 percent of production capacity with a daily requirement of 1,200 liters for coco syrup alone. They had to turn down some orders. To address the worsening



effects of the drought, Benjamin had to spend PHP1.2 million from his own pocket to help set-up a water system. Aside from his own coconut trees in his now 14-hectare farm, he gets additional supply from 125 Bansalan farmers.

Benjamin acknowledges that without assistance from government agencies, particularly DTI, business would be bleak. Today, his German buyer gets 80 drums (one drum=200 liters) of syrup per month, with 60 drums for their US market.

His business expanded with bakery operation, offering products sweetened by coco sugar and refreshments that are healthy – goat's milk with coco sugar ice cream, moringa tea, guyabano tea and turmeric tea, among others. They do not

sell soda in an attempt to influence people to embrace a healthy lifestyle. Recently, Benjamin signed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Social Welfare and Development to train 4Ps beneficiaries for free on organic farming, as well as with some public schools for the K-12 program students training in their farm as an elective subject. Benjamin is looking forward to adding more scholars and opening another processing plant in another town to let more people experience the sweet taste of success.





This livelihood afforded the Manuvu tribe to enjoy life's simple pleasures
Coco sugar sweetens the life of Cotabato women

by Cheryl Marie C. Cipriano, Epifania Ealdamia and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña
 Photographer: Vanessa Claire T. Pleña



Barangay Aroman in the municipality of Carmen, Cotabato teems with coconuts. And it is from this abundance that the success of the Aroman Natural Food Women's Producers Cooperative (ANFWC) traces its roots.

The year 2008 was when the Philippine Coconut Authority came up with the idea of a livelihood for the wives of the farmhands, about half of whom were members of the Manuvu tribe. Life was hard, the men earning only a pittance while wives were mostly at home taking care of the children.

This changed when 21 of the women and seven men working as *mananguetes* or coconut wine tappers, joined a fledgling group to start the production of coco sugar. With little knowledge about the process, they approached DTI and were offered capability building and skills trainings on food safety assurance such as hazard analysis and critical control points, and good manufacturing practices. There were also training on packaging, labeling, and product branding. The following year, the group registered with the Cooperative Development Authority.

Thereafter, they ventured into the commercial production of coco sugar which fast-tracked their growth. DTI selected the



coop as one of the SSF beneficiaries for packaging facilities worth PHP1.3 million that included a sacheting machine, pH meter, refractometer, stainless steel working tables, foot sealer, vacuum sealer, and sifting machine.

"DTI greatly helped us improve our below-standard packaging quality. The lack of machines and equipment was the reason why we were always doing trial-and-error resulting to slow growth and low productivity," said Desebel Jadraque, chair of the cooperative.

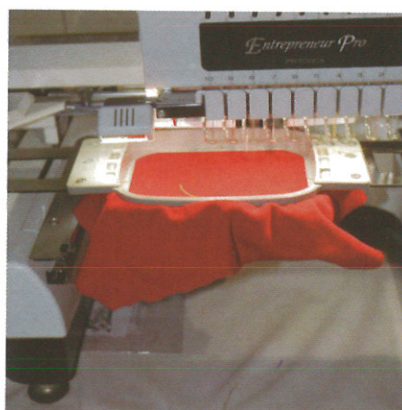
Thereafter, Coconut Republic, a Manila-based consolidator, sourced its coco sugar, currently known as health sugar, from this Cotabato-based coop to export to the United States and Europe. DTI also helped market their products by encouraging them to join trade fairs and exhibits at the local, regional, and national levels. Their growth was remarkable such that the cooperative now has 75 women processors and 20 coconut wine tappers working fulltime.

Now, the women earn a minimum of PHP7,000 a month, a boost to their families' finances. For their part, the men now earn a low of PHP2,500 and a high of PHP4,000 a week as *mananguetes*. These earnings helped send their children to school, with some already graduating from college to be our country's nurses, teachers, and engineers.

The cooperative has been a truly life-changing experience for the members, particularly for the Manuvu tribe. From having barely enough to eat, they can now afford life's simple pleasures, such as riding a tricycle or even owning a motorcycle. They could now improve their houses using sturdier materials instead of just using *nipa* palm fronds. The members, most of whom are indigenous peoples, can now avail of loans from financing institutions through the help of the cooperative. These loans are used to venture into business such as sari-sari stores or buy farm animals and farm implements that further increase their income, and help improve their lives.

Her miserable childhood became the driving force of her desire to help others Moving forward to a better life

by Vanessa Claire T. Pleña and Angelito Villar
Photographer: Vanessa Claire T. Pleña



Consejo P. Mistral, 73, single, is the manager of Moving Forward for Quality Life Association (MFQLA), established with the purpose of helping send children of its members to school. Located at the heart of Cotabato City, the association also helps to uplift the lives of its 25 members and encourage them to start their own businesses so they would gain financial independence.

“Nang Conching,” as she is fondly called, grew up poor, orphaned at a young age, and used to live in a shanty where her family ate, slept, and played in one small room. That became her motivating factor to work hard for a better future.

While studying, she worked in a store owned by a prominent family in the city who helped her start her own garment business. Nang Conching registered the business under a sole proprietorship in 1971 with a capital of PHP300. At that time, supplies were cheap and sewing machines were still the manual type. The son of her former employer gave her sewing machines and three members of her family helped her in the business. With her enterprise, she was able to put food on their table

and helped send her siblings, nieces, and nephews to school.

After several years, Nang Conching purchased electric sewing machines giving up the old ones to her employees so they can start their own business at home. By working at home, her employees saved on transportation and at the same time, had the time to take care of the family. The arrangement was great for bulk orders, seamstresses will be paid according to their outputs while working at home. It was at this point, in the early 2000s that the idea of the association came to Nang Conching. The MFQLA was born.

In 2013, the association benefited from the DTI's Shared Service Facility Program where it received one gartering machine, one button holer, two electric sewing machines, and one four-thread embroidery machine. “DTI helped us greatly. The new equipment enabled us to create high-quality outputs and helped us meet orders on time. This kind of assistance is rare. I don't doubt the quality of my seamstresses' workmanship because all the units we use are good and reliable,” Nang Conching said.

Today, the association earns as much as PHP20,000 to PHP30,000 per month. Home-based employees of four females and six males earn individually a minimum of PHP10,000 a month and more with bulk orders. Five more regular employees also earn from Nang Conching's garment business. Exceptional days bring quadruple income for the association and its members, such as when there are sports events with orders for customized sports apparel and jackets coming in large volume.

The MFQLA practices corporate social responsibility by handing in their waste materials to women inmates in the provincial jail so they can utilize them as raw materials for making bags and rags.

Meanwhile, most of the children of MFQLA employees have graduated from college. Some of them are now nurses, accountants, and engineers. Nearby associations and cooperatives pay a visit to learn how the MFQLA succeeded in improving lives of its members. To them, Nang Conching advised, “Just give your full commitment and be a role model. Share when you can. That's how our business came to be,” she said.

These fishermen's wives make their husbands proud as they carry half of the sky

Tuna cooperative delivers industry needs

by Cheryl Marie C. Cipriano, Marvin Genita and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña
Photographer: Vanessa Claire Pleña



General Santos City is home to a large base of tuna producers, one of which is RD Fishing, a business with interests in commercial fishing and tuna canning. The company has operations in Papua New Guinea where a thousand of its fishermen ply the seas to earn around PHP14,000 a month. Their stay-home wives take care of the children, and while their time away in idle gossip or in watching *telenovelas*.

In 2006, with a little prodding from Marilyn Forio, a local leader, 20 women organized to make rags and dye bags needed by RD Fishing, which was then sourced from local hardware stores. The company donated PHP100,000 as financial support while the women contributed PHP2,650 each as individual shares. Registered with the Cooperative Development Authority in 2008, the coop started producing the rags and bags.

As a newbie, the cooperative began to experience internal challenges. By 2012, it was on the verge of insolvency. They approached DTI that was then implementing the SSF Program for assistance. In November 2014, RSA Cooperative became an SSF recipient of 33 units of machinery that included straight machines, cutters, steam presses, zigzagers, and edgers worth almost PHP9 million

With a complete line of production equipment, they now supply not only RD Fishing for their requirements but also other new markets such as Ford Motors-Gensan, Sea Best Food and Beverage Corporation, Damalerio Fishing Corporation, Arowana Agriventures Corporation, RDEX Food International Philippines,

Inc., Gensan Shipyard and Machine Works, Inc., and Horizon Can Corporation. RD Fishing's sister companies, RD Fishing PNG Ltd., and RD Tuna Canners Ltd., both located in Papua New Guinea also started to place orders for needed supplies.

DTI has extended further its services by providing capability-building training and by inviting them to join local and regional trade fairs such as Yaman Gensan, Tuna Congress, Treasures of Region 12, and the Tuna Festival, which are mostly free of charge. Their product lines also expanded as they made pouches, bags, pillowcases, curtains, bedsheets, potholders, aprons, doormats, and even headgears.

From near bankruptcy, the cooperative bounced back. The members receive as much as PHP10,000 each in yearly dividends, while member-sewers and contracted sewers hired to beef up production earn as much as PHP11,000 a month. Paid on a daily basis, they now earn extra money for their children's daily school allowance, to pay electric and water bills, to buy food and medicines, appliances as well personal grooming products.

"The DTI had been a big help by providing us with additional income. The cooperative has grown. We can now meet our purchase orders since we can now sew faster," enthused Amelyn Astorga, the coop's operations manager.

This is an accomplishment that goes deeper into the lives of the members who are also "better halves," giving them a new found sense of purpose, and one that will long be remembered not just by them, but by those whose lives have become better because of them.

A hobby for candy-making merges with knack for marketing

Best friends and business partners

by Dagny Athena Aquino Martirizar and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña
Photographers: Dagny Athena Aquino Martirizar and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña



When two single ladies joined the business world in 2006, no one noticed. With a start-up capital of only PHP200, the crack of the starting gun was barely heard. Today, however, their company, RoseChie Food Products is widely known and has earned a good reputation among sweet lovers and lovers of sweets in the region and beyond.

RoseChie is an acronym for best friends Rosanna Baguio and Rowena Archie Patinio from General Santos City. The business began out of Chie's candy-making hobby and Rosanna's yen for marketing and promotions - individual talents and skills that complemented each other. RoseChie's initial offerings were yema, sampaloc candy, and polvoron.

With the mistaken notion that the business only involved cooking and selling, the food impresarios were not ready for growth when they began adding more products that cost them a considerable amount of resources due

to a short shelf life. The DTI, with its business advisory services, came to the rescue.

The DTI encouraged RoseChie to participate in various trade fairs in General Santos City, Tacurong, South Cotabato, Cotabato, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, and Manila, the most recent being the Treasures of SOX Travel and Trade Expo at Glorietta in April 2016 where their products flew off the shelves.

From a market composed only of people they know, the duo initially sold their products at the General Santos City Airport where it met an impressive response. The duo followed it with sales in SM GenSan Pasalubong Center, and, KCC Malls both in General Santos and Koronadal Cities. Currently, a fruit processing company is sourcing their candies and coats them with chocolate.

The best friends and business partners realized how lucrative their business has become when they were able to buy a 150-square meter lot, built a house, and constructed a plant

facility. RoseChie's growth accelerated when they availed of a loan from the city government of General Santos. Infused with additional capital, the company progressed and hired more employees, mostly working students. In addition, the DTI also referred the enterprise to the Department of Science and Technology for a loan of PHP245,000 payable in five years under the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) Program.

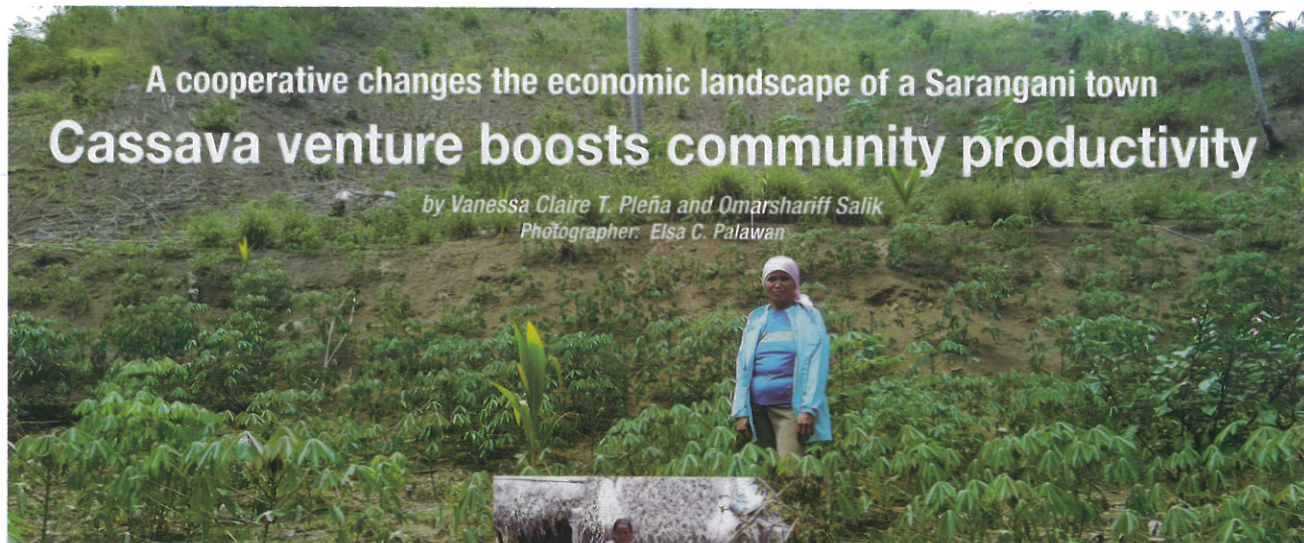
With the loan, the partners bought a cooking mixer, flour mixer, and band sealer. From their earnings, an industrial oven was purchased. Use of these enhancements increased the company's productivity from 60 packs to 480 daily, a leap of 800 percent!

RoseChie Food Products is now in its tenth year and the partners remain optimistic about the future of their enterprise. With 20 delectable products altogether and an ever expanding market, they look forward to a more exciting and successful decade.

A cooperative changes the economic landscape of a Sarangani town

Cassava venture boosts community productivity

by Vanessa Claire T. Pleña and Omarshariff Salik
Photographer: Elsa C. Palawan



Malapatan is a town in Sarangani where Christians, Muslims, and indigenous people live harmoniously. It is home to the famous B'laan "dreamweavers" who craft sleeping mats using the designs they dreamed about.

In 1992, the local government employees of the Municipality of Malapatan, organized an "informal" cooperative to collectively save money for loans to members. Delinquent payments forced it to close. Revived and converted into a canteen for employees, it suffered losses and closed. In 2006, it began as a quasi-bank operation and changed its name to Malapatan Multi-Purpose Incorporated. Duly registered with the Cooperative Development Authority in 2010, it was renamed to Malapatan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MMPC) and it went into financing and ventured into a gasoline station business with Sea Oil.

In 2013, the coop negotiated with the San Miguel Foods Inc. for cassava assembling and consolidation. Earlier on, the DTI introduced Supply Management thru Investments for Large Enterprise or SMILE Program, a market-driven program tapping corporate social responsibility of large companies by identifying raw or semi-processed material requirements as a business opportunity for micro, small, and medium enterprises. San Miguel Foods Inc. tapped MMPC as assemblers of cassava chips for their feed production.



With PHP300,000 as revolving capital and a loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines, the cooperative encouraged its members to plant cassava. San Miguel provided planting materials good for 20 hectares with the coop trucking it in from Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon, about eight hours away. Normally, a hectare of cassava yields 4,000 to 5,000 kilos of dried chunk cassava valued at PHP40,000 to PHP60,000.

The community awakened to a new business opportunity. Indigenous B'laan tribe members with no regular income were hired to plant and, during the harvest season, slice huge cassava tubers into chunks and chips. Members of this indigenous community earn as much as PHP500 a day during harvest time.

Farmers said chopping cassava is easy. Sliced or chunked cassava tubers are delivered to the coop at a price of eight pesos a kilo. Converted into granules, the coop sells them to San Miguel Foods at ten pesos a kilo. The coop earns about PHP40,000 net income from 10 tons of cassava granules per week but hopes to see a rise in production with the growing number of cassava planters.

The DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program and the Department of Agriculture provided MMPC with cassava chippers and granulators, the latter adding in a tractor. The equipment sped up the process of turning sliced and chunk cassava into granules. The coop bought a 169-square meter lot in Brgy. Tuyan, Malapatan to host the cassava processing area. The place also served as a warehouse for both cassava and copra.

In 2015, the coop's capitalization rose to PHP13 million with total assets of PHP51 million. The following year, the MMPC expanded further by financing utility van transport vehicles from Malapatan to General Santos. Soon, a convenience store and a dormitory will be built within their office's vicinity. It also plans to venture into the virgin coconut oil and cacao industries.

Elsa C. Palawan, 27, the coop's bookkeeper and assistant of the general manager, revealed that the cassava industry in Malapatan galvanized the lives of many in the community because it has become a community enterprise. Many members of the indigenous communities found jobs that dramatically improved their lives affording them life's necessities and simple pleasures.

"Some of us were able to buy motorcycles, others were able to build a house," said Ms. Maylin Balandan, a farmer of a three-hectare plantation in Mandalas, in Malapatan town.

With a unique selling point and delightful taste, this one's a sure winner

Crunchy atchara intrigues delighted palates

by Waren Jay Nantes and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña

Photographer: Venus Siodora



A tchara is pickle made from grated unripe papaya, a popular side dish. Mommy Juling Crunchy Atchara, as the name implies, is crunchy, a unique characteristic that sets it apart from other *atcharas*. The brand name pays homage to the creator of the recipe, the mother-in-law of Dave Ortiz, the sole proprietor of BKR Food Products and Services.

BKR was born in the kitchen of Mommy Juling who used traditional methods in cooking *atchara* to ship to Dave's family in Davao during special occasions. Crunchy and tasty, Dave broached the idea of producing the *atchara* on a commercial scale. The couple did a market research by buying atchara from the malls in General Santos City, Koronadal, and Davao.

To test the marketability, Dave's wife, Rona, sold the atchara to friends and neighbors. Dave had a taste test in his office. Concluding that Mommy Juling's recipe can compete with *atcharas* in the market, a small-scale production began. Unfortunately, they had a big amount of spoilage costing them money that almost made them quit. But instead, they repackaged and decided to go full blast.

The couple registered BKR with the DTI in September 2007 and two months later, the product was displayed at KCC Mall in General Santos City. In January 2008, they secured their business permit and expanded the market with displays at FitMart Gensan, FitMart Marbel, Ace CenterPoint, and KCC Marbel. Later, they added Victoria Plaza Mall, Gaisano Mall, and Robinsons Supermarket in Davao City.

In 2009, Dave and Rona acquired a 1.3-hectare land and planted it with papaya that supplied 50 percent of the production requirement. The couple also put up a small processing facility adjacent to Mommy Juling's house, a Food and Drugs Administration (FDA)-compliant facility. The Rural Micro-Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP) assisted them in securing a license from the FDA to operate as a manufacturer. The DTI's Micro Small Medium Enterprise (MSME) Center helped them subscribe to GSPhils for the product's barcode.

The year 2011 was a remarkable year for business. They joined local and regional trade fairs and recently, the International Food Expo (IFEX) at the SMX Convention Center in Manila. Before the end of that year, BKR received the International Trophy for Leadership in Image and Quality from the Editorial Office and Trade Leaders' Club in Madrid, Spain, a 7,000-member club with chapters in 93 countries.

RuMEPP South Cotabato nominated BKR Food Products and sponsored Rona's participation to the Pinoy Micro Entrepreneurs Convention in February 2012 in Manila. It was in this event that Rona acknowledged the DTI's assistance in BKR's growth.

After eight years, BKR Food Products has gained a solid reputation as a manufacturer of high-quality *atchara*, thanks to Mommy Juling's recipe. As it continues to grow, BKR is now producing an average of 3,000 kilos of *atchara* a month.

In a remote barangay where opportunities are scarce, a group of housewives pooled their talents and started an enterprise

A group of women's journey towards a sustainable community enterprise

by Waren Jay Nantes and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña
Photographers: Waren Jay Nantes and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña



Danlag is a remote barangay in Tampakan town, populated mainly by Cebuanos and B'laan tribe. Farming is the major source of income apart from work in small mining operations. It is in this locality that a group of women gradually turned from being plain housewives to entrepreneurs.

The Danlag Women's Association (DWA) was organized in 2007. Having no other activity, the 128-member women's group actively participated in barangay-initiated events and gatherings such as fiesta, foundation anniversary, or Christmas party. But its president Mrs. Virginia A. Basan had plans. Through her leadership, the association instituted the micro financing scheme for its members in 2008 using the PHP 20,000 endowed by the barangay council as start-up capital for economic activities. Up to this day, this successful micro finance activity continues to help members of the association.

In 2009, Mrs. Basan learned about the Rural Micro Enterprises Promotion Program (RuMEPP) from the DTI. Before

the year was over, Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI), a multinational mining company, donated a substantial amount to the association to serve as its working capital.

The following year, Mrs. Basan, introduced the DWA members to her herbal brew preparations with turmeric and ginger (*salabat*) as main ingredients. Having been trained by RuMEPP in Business Development Institute for Rural Micro Entrepreneurs, she moved to improve the packaging and labelling of the group's products from cellophane to food grade-labelled stand-up pouches. From then on, the turmeric and *salabat* products of the women's association were always showcased at the trade fairs promoted by RuMEPP in the local and regional levels.

The DWA became a member of the South Cotabato Foods & Crafts Association, Inc. The group's core purpose was to promote and develop their own micro enterprises by helping each other through coaching, raw materials sourcing, and packaging requirement. The group also encouraged

participation in different local trade fairs.

Through RuMEPP, the DWA was linked with the Department of Science and Technology's Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (DOST SETUP) and was awarded a project worth PHP400,000. In 2014, the DTI made the women's association the first beneficiary of its Shared Service Facilities (SSF) Project and turned over a solar dryer and a form fill and seal machine amounting to PHP600,000. Another solar dryer was awarded as part of the SSF expansion in 2015.

The enhancements led to an increase in yearly gross receipts from PHP19,000 with four workers in 2011 to PHP175,000 with 15 workers in 2015. Each member could earn up to PHP1,800 a week as a raw material supplier of fresh turmeric.

With this continuous progress, DTI RuMEPP proudly made this women's group in Danlag a good example of economically-empowered women in the countryside as an instrument in the development of a sustainable community-based micro enterprise.

Modernizing a generation of traditional pottery makers

South Cotabato's land of the clay

by Waren Jay Nantes and Vanessa Claire T. Pleña
 Photographer: Waren Jay Nantes



Barangay San Felipe in Tantangan, South Cotabato, is sometimes referred to as “The Land of Clay,” due to its abundant clay deposits. As expected, pottery making is a thriving industry, passed down to second and third generations of pottery-makers since the industry began in the early 50s when migrants from Luzon and Visayas arrived.

Pottery making has been a way of life for Rex Soliven, along with 27 other pottery makers who look at pottery not as an art form but as a means of livelihood. Their products, shaped and formed by traditional methods handed down through generations, are displayed along the South Cotabato-Sultan Kudarat Highway, 15 minutes from the City of Koronadal. As a business, operations are not recorded; sales are not posted. This traditional pottery is celebrated in March and part of the annual Kalan-on festival, a fusion of kalan (clay pots) and kalan-on (mostly rice-based delicacies from Luzon and Visayas).

When DTI conducted a community needs assessment and community leveraging, it found that the manufacturing of pottery products

entails a strenuous process using a carabao for clay handling and the potter's foot for wheel driving. With eagerness, the pottery makers actively participated in the business development services where the barangay and municipal government units provided technical and organizational development assistance.

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) extended technology improvement on pots and bricks and the DTI through its Rural Micro Enterprises Promotion Program (RuMEPP) implemented the project Bridging Rural Industry for Community Sustainability. The latter focused on contributing directly to the development of the pottery as an industry and up-scaling the pottery makers as formal entrepreneurs. Hence the birth of Purok O' Belo Pottery Makers' Association (POPMA).

In 2013, POPMA became one of DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) cooperators, receiving five motorized rollers and ten potter's wheels. As a counterpart, POPMA provided the equity requirement of the project such as shelter for the equipment, initial mobilization fund, and personnel to

manage the project. The association also participated in the trade fair and exhibits at the Tantangan Anniversary celebration, T'nalak, and Kalimudan Festivals. In addition, the pottery makers underwent a seminar on costing and pricing conducted in July 2014.

As a result, POPMA increased its output as the quality of clay improved with the use of the clay rollers. With processing time cut by 75 percent, productivity rose considerably. Entrepreneurial capability training enhanced the operational techniques of the association and its members. The group also established appropriate pricing standards and identified and accessed a wider market. A 50 percent increase in the average sales was registered.

Mr. Soliven, POPMA president said, “SSF did not only improve our production performance, it also considerably eased our workload. We thank DTI and DOST for making us realize that there are technology advancements available that could enhance our production techniques and make our work easier.”

Growing and expanding and finding no more takers for their extra sugar cane harvest, the couple processed them on their own

The Rookie's *muscovado* adventure

by Vanessa Claire T. Pleña and Joven S. Quiriones
Photographer: Nella A. Roche



When Johnny and Jocelyn got married in 1992, they rented a portion of land for planting rice and corn. A year after, the landowner sold them a two-hectare property costing PHP 400,000. Over the next seven years, they already acquired a total of six hectares. The couple ventured into “buy and sell” of agricultural products and later acquired a truck, *kuliglig* (tractor with trailer) and tresher.

Life was good for this couple. They continued to purchase land. In 2003, Johnny acquired another tractor and went into sugarcane plantation starting in a two-hectare higher ground. In 2006, heavy rain affected their corn plantation prompting the couple to couple to convert another 20 hectares of land into sugarcane plantation.

The couple sold their harvest to Cotabato Sugar Central Corporation (CoSuSeCo), a sugar mill. At that time, a sack of sugar is valued at PHP 2500, earning 60 percent of every sack produced. The price being favorable, the Agdumas increased their area of production to 85 hectares in 2011 harvesting around 120 tons per

hectare. CoSuSeCo could no longer accommodate the huge volume of harvest compelling the couple to venture into *muscovado* (organic brown sugar) processing in 2012. The Rookie Milling Plant was born.

The couple started with a PHP 2 million capital, operating for six days a week, producing about twenty tons a month. *Muscovado* was sold at PHP 30 pesos per kilo with only labor and packaging materials expensed. Waste materials such as *bagasi* (remnants of squeezed sugar canes) and *kayan* (corn cobs) were used for other purposes. With a minimal expense, the owners attained the return of investment in just three years.

During the early days of their muscovado processing business, the couple sought DTI's support and guidance in obtaining business and FDA permits. They participated in DTI's training and seminars, and eventually, trade fairs.

According to Mrs. Agduma, “Of course, starting a business is not easy. There are plenty of things involved in the business that we don't know about. That's why we approached DTI where

we learned strategies marketing skills and strategies. We also learned how to negotiate and experienced business growth. If we are to rate DTI, I'll give them a nine out of 10. It was our source of help right from the start.”

Today, with 35 in-house employees, the Rookie Milling Plant is a picture of pulsating productivity. Entrenched in the local market with an FDA-certified product, business continues to expand adding another 15 hectares of sugarcane plantation to support its production requirement.

With the promise of the muscovado industry, Mrs. Agduma looks forward to a more prosperous town of Lambayong. For those who would like to try this business, “Hard work and diligence are the keys,” she advised. “Starting a business is not easy. There are many things involved in the business that we know nothing about. That's why we approached DTI and learned marketing skills and strategies. Also, we learned to negotiate and handle our business that lead to its growth. If we are to rate DTI, I'll give them a nine out of 10, since it really strengthened the foundation of our business.”



Moringa supplements not only one's nutritional needs but also people's livelihood *Enterprising farmers cash in on a highly valued crop*

by Banawe B. Corvera and Ramabe D. Montilla
Photographer: Efren L. Lascuna

Five years ago in Jabonga, Agusan del Norte, enterprising members of the United Farmers of Cuyago, Inc. (UFCI) had the foresight to begin planting moringa (malunggay) trees believing that someday they could supply fresh leaves to local buyers and processors. A research found that moringa leaves possess high nutritional value as it contains seven times the vitamin C found in orange and four times the calcium content in milk.

True enough, the UFCI started harvesting fresh moringa leaves, highly optimistic of the potential earning opportunities the crops could bring. UFCI was under the guidance of the Agri-Aqua Development Coalition (AADC), a local non government organization aimed at empowering farmer-organizations by enabling them to engage in viable economic activities. The AADC enabled the UFCI to secure a tie-up with a processor even before the first harvest.

Soon, it started selling fresh moringa leaves in bundles at eight pesos a kilo to a buyer in the locality. Transactions ran smoothly at the start, but after a couple of months, the buying suddenly ceased leaving





the farmers in a lurch. The group's PHP780,000 investment in the 39-hectare plantation was put at risk, including their livelihood.

It prompted the UFCI and AADC to consult with the DTI which, after a series of consultative meetings with both organizations, conducted a project evaluation to assess the viability of the business. Having determined the needed interventions for the fledgling enterprise, the UFCI was made a cooperator under the DTI's Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program for moringa powder processing.

The PHP645,000 worth of SSF equipment provided by the DTI comprised of one unit each of moringa leaf dryer, moringa leaf pulverizer, computing weighing scale, impulse foot sealer, and two stainless steel tables. The assistance was bolstered by the financial help extended by the local government of

Jabonga in the amount of PHP367,000 for building renovation to enhance productivity.

With upscaled equipment, improved workplace, and now employing 102 farm workers and 13 powder processors, UFCI's production capacity increased from two to four tons of fresh moringa leaves per month. The organization now produces moringa powder and flakes selling them at PHP350 to PHP600 per kilo. Monthly sales also rose from PHP16,000 to 20,000 on fresh moringa leaves and from PHP30,000 to PHP35,000 on flakes and powder.

Thankful for the DTI's intervention and help from the local government, the UFCI's moringa brew is currently sold at the local One-Town One-Product Pasaubong Centers and the Negosyo Center in Butuan City. In the works are moringa capsule and 3-in-1 moringa beverage.

Her own healing experience is the selling point Brewing a healthier alternative

by Banawe B. Corvera
Photographer: Banawe B. Corvera



With her personal healing experience from drinking her own concoction, Alicia Paglinawan envisaged Sunrise Corn Coffee as a healthy alternative that could benefit not just her customers but also the 40 local residents who work in the enterprise. Her own testimony on her improved health was echoed by satisfied

customers who also willingly shared their own stories.

“Many people drink coffee at home and at work. We have also observed how people nowadays are increasingly more health conscious,” her husband, Ernesto Paglinawan said. An alternative to pure coffee, ingredients of the corn



Photo Credit: Cerila P. Inson and Banawe B. Corvera



coffee are believed to relieve diabetes, hypertension, and hyperacidity. Deciding to go into business was a critical turning point for the Paglinawans who both **quit** their jobs in 2005.

With a 200-peso **capital**, the husband-and-wife team **started** by cooking six kilos of corn coffee and sold from door to door. They rolled what little capital they have, unaware that their product was being promoted by word of mouth by happy customers. Over the years, initial monthly sales of PHP550 rose to PHP95,000 with a volume capacity of 12 sacks of corn coffee per week.

The couple admitted that they went through several trials and challenges before clinching the perfect corn coffee formulation. In fact, Alicia started at roasting and grinding native corn manually to create her brew.

"I almost gave up with the numerous difficulties we had encountered. But my

wife was really the driving force behind this. She saw beyond the circumstances. She also saw the opportunity to help the community by providing a means of livelihood," Ernesto said.

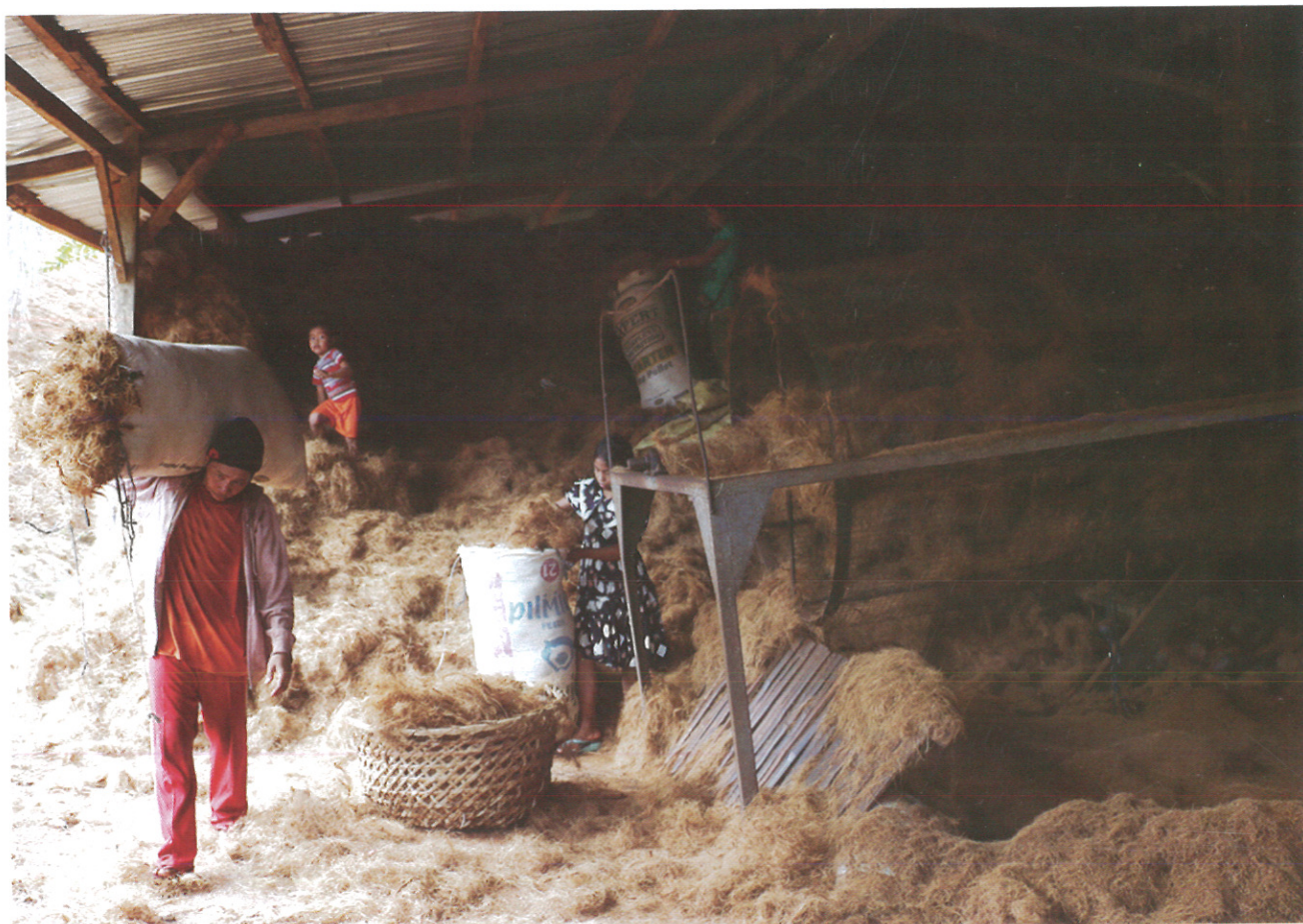
Their first few customers included local door-to-door buyers, teachers, and government employees. Aside from manufacturing a high-quality product, the couple built customers' trust through the faithful timely delivery of products, which they claimed contributed to the success of their business.

With DTI's assistance, Alicia was given several opportunities to improve her product packaging and labeling as well as to meet buyers in trade fairs. Soon, the Paglinawans upgraded from manual to mechanized operations using the generated sales from trade fairs to buy the necessary equipment. The DTI also helped them access financial funds from the provincial government. In 2005,

Sunrise Corn Coffee won the Trendy Award by CITEM followed by the Sipag at Tiya Award by the Villar Foundation in 2008.

From a home-based business, Sunrise Corn Coffee is now available in **selected** stores nationwide as well as with Filipino dealers in Malaysia, Japan, and Australia.

Sunrise Corn Coffee now uses state-of-the-art equipment to maintain the highest quality of standards for their products. The brand, which is now Halal certified, is also the sole business licensed to produce corn coffee by the Food and Drug Administration. To further reach new and existing market segments, they invested in marketing Sunrise Corn Coffee through their website: <http://www.sunrisecorncoffee.com/>.



Community livelihood with a bayanihan spirit

The fiber that binds the community together

by Banawe B. Corvera
 Photographer: Banawe B. Corvera

In rural areas, especially in remote villages, people's livelihood projects often revolve around farming and small, informal businesses. When employment opportunities arise, people come together to work and earn, contributing hard work, commitment, and optimistic spirit to build a successful community undertaking that benefits everyone.

This show of strength can be likened to the qualities of coco

coir, the fiber that is recovered from the fibrous pulp of the coconut. Durable and resilient, it resists abrasion and holds water, and is biodegradable.



Life has improved in Barangay Ladgadan, San Francisco, thanks to the livelihood provided by coco coir. Families no longer rely on farming

alone, a livelihood which is subject to extreme weather conditions. The Kaagap Development Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KaagapMuco) of Agusan del Sur is a testament to the community's perseverance and teamwork. A community enterprise, it began as a small farmers' organization in 1991 and was registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) in 2004.

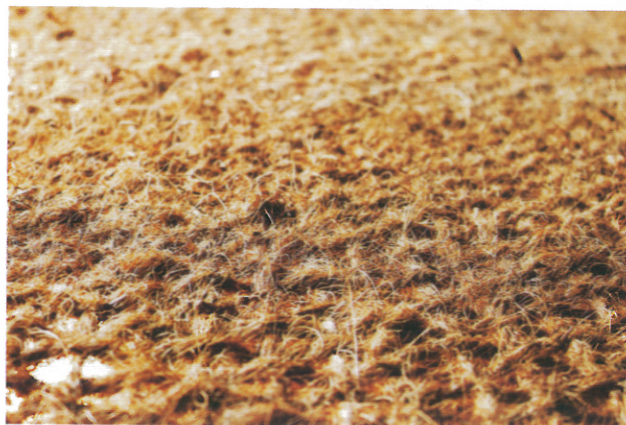


Photo Credit: Cerila P. Inson and Banawe B. Corvera

Their production area is located in Hubang, San Francisco.

After several failed ventures in lending and a consumer store, the coop members found a viable alternative in coconet production. The cooperative previously focused on buying and selling coconut, producing coconut logs, virgin coconut oil, coco peanut, coconut vinegar, and coconut honey.

Back then, the cooperative's coconet production only yielded small volumes. They asked DTI for help in addressing issues with production

capacity. Through the Shared Service Facility (SSF), KaagapMuco was awarded equipment amounting to PHP506,850. This includes 50 units manual twining equipment, ten units of electric twining equipment, and ten units of loom weaving equipment.

Production level has increased significantly with the SSF-provided equipment. It resulted in increased productivity by reducing the number of times the weavers roll up the woven fiber to reach 50 meters. With better production capacity, the cooperative

now competes with other enterprises similarly engaged in coconet production and now sets its sights on the export market.

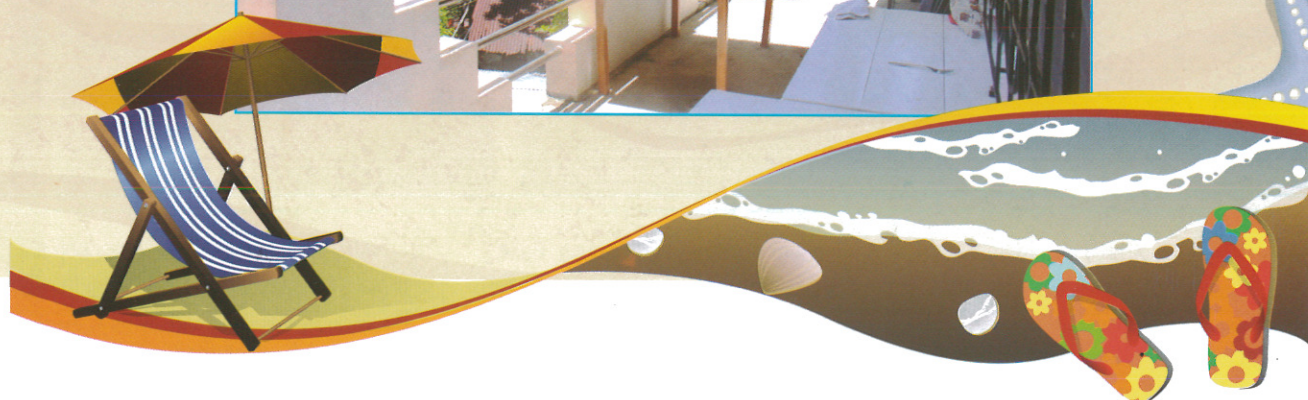
From 12 workers, KAAGAPMUCO now gives fixed incomes to 395 workers comprising of 285 twiners, 24 weavers, 60 installers, and 26 office staff. The cooperative is now also directly involved in the installation of geo-nets, further increasing its job generation capacity. A shared ownership, the cooperative continues to grow benefitting all its members in the community.

Cashing in on an emerging tourist destination

A cooperative invests in Dinagat Island's tourism potential

by Banawe B. Corvera and Irene L. Macheca

Photographer: Jean L. Galay



The mere mention of Dinagat Islands awakens a keen desire to visit unspoiled natural sights, to bask in its beauty, to discover its treasures, to get to know its people and culture better.

Thelma S. Sigue, chairperson of the Wilson Agra Multi-Purpose Cooperative (WAMPCO) is effusive on the potentials of Dinagat Island's capital, San Jose, as an emerging tourism pick. As the gateway to the province, Thelma believes that if it has facilities catering to the needs of the traveling pack, tourists will be encouraged to come.

The capital, San Jose, like any other towns, has carinderias and small eateries. With an enterprising eye that sees the potential opportunities as well as needs, WAMPCO found it viable to put up a restaurant that would serve as a comfortable place for eating out and cozy stopover for guests and tourists to enjoy good food.

Fund sourcing became a crucial priority for WAMPCO, and fast. It was fortunate that the consultation for Bottom Up Budgeting (BuB) funding project came at the right time. Through the collaborative efforts of the cooperative, the DTI and the local government of San Jose, the PHP1 million project

proposal was approved, paving the way for the establishment of Mabuhay Dinagat Restaurant and Catering Services. The fund was used for operating capital, capability enhancement, utensils, and other equipment. Showing confidence in the viability of the chosen business, WAMPCO matched the BuB fund with PHP1.7 million as counterpart and used to construct the building to house the restaurant business.

Since its launch in October 2015, Mabuhay Dinagat Restaurant has become a go-to destination for tourists and locals. The restaurant employs five regular workers with 20 on-call servers for special events and catering services. Sales picked-up from three fronts: walk-in, take-out, and catering service.

With the support provided by the DTI, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the local government of San Jose, the WAMPCO, organized in 1996 with 15 members, is slowly achieving its vision of contributing to the growth of the tourism industry of Dinagat Islands. With its success, it is no wonder that the cooperative now has 600 members and gunning for the 1,000-member mark.

The coco coir is a gift that keeps on giving Twining coco coir changes the community's economic landscape

by Ma. Malen B. Catamora
Photographer: Ellen J. Bongato



Claver, the largest municipality of Surigao del Norte, has vast iron mineral deposits with five big mining companies in operation. It also has 4,650 hectares of land planted with coconut trees. For people who do not work in the mining industry, the twining of the coco coir offered a source of income. For other families, coco coir means additional earnings

Claver Coconut Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CLACOFARMCO) dreamed of a better life for the coconut farmers but with the low price of copra, the farmers needed additional income. Fully aware of the agricultural potentials in the community, the Philippine Coconut Authority in 2008 introduced the geonet, a net made from the coconut husks. Mining companies use geonets to rehabilitate the soil and prevent erosion.

In the past, the members of the cooperative only depended on copra for a living. Their income was insufficient for their growing family since the price of copra was fluctuating. They cannot even afford to send their children to

school or build a decent house. Back then, the members were not that convinced that twining coco coir would relieve them from poverty.

The cooperative engaged its members to twine coco coir, the material used to create geonet and sell them to the mining companies. Manual twining of the coco coir is an arduous and time-consuming task making it a challenge for the coop to meet demands on time. It was then that the cooperative requested for DTI's assistance. As a cooperator, the DTI awarded the CLACOFARMCO with equipment provided by the Shared Service Facility (SSF) program consisting of 100 units of twining machines and 10 units of weaving machine.

"When the cooperative was newly established, most of the mothers in the community spent their idle time playing cards in the waiting shed of the vicinity, day and night," revealed Mrs. Victorina Delegencia, one of the pioneering members of the cooperative. "But now, they are spending their time making coco coir twines and mats."

Mrs. Delegencia said, "The coop's project is really of big help to my family. Because of the work it provided, I was able to send my child to school and had my house repaired," explaining that her old house made of light materials is now made of concrete.

A coop member, Mrs. Pacita A. Rodriguez said, "We had a big income, for that I am very grateful. Before my daughter got married, we were paid around PHP5,000-6,000 a week. She, and my other children, helped in twining coco coir."

Mark, a student in the seventh grade said, "After class, I immediately come to the plant to twine coco coir. I save my pay for my allowance."

Indeed, the processing of coco coir, the twining, and the weaving, continues to uplift the living conditions of the families of the cooperative members. Gambling within the site's vicinity ceased, too, because the coop members and their families have found something productive to do.

A shared service facility program-supported school bakery aims to train technopreneural skills to senior high school students

Earning while learning

by Lyza D. Trapal

Photographer: Ellen J. Bongato



The mantra, “earn while you learn,” rings true for the Bacuag National Agro-Industrial School (BNAIS) in Bacuag, Surigao del Norte. Teaching students technopreneural skills that they could learn and earn from is part of the school’s strategic vision – a vision supported by the DTI’s Shared Service Facility (SSF) program.

The BNAIS is one of the two technical-vocational schools in the Division of Surigao Del Norte with agriculture as its flagship offering. It has an impressive academic record producing a good number of students who passed for and obtained scholarship grants. Adding a feather to its cap is the Junior Chamber international’s (JCI) Outstanding Student of Surigao 2014 award to one of its student, the first ever in Bacuag and for the school.

“The school’s hard-earned academic record gave us the confidence to accept the challenges in offering in advance the Senior High School Curriculum under the K-12 Program for the school year 2015–2016,” said Mr. Jose Gil L. Escabal, Principal II of BNAIS.

With the onset of the new curriculum, the BNAIS faced urgent concerns such as the need for service equipment and facilities in demonstrating new technology to students. Thus, the principal said, “We submitted to the DTI a project proposal for a bakeshop for BNAIS with the fervent hope that in partnering with the DTI through SSF, our school’s offering for the senior high school will be more meaningful in training our students with technopreneural skills for socio- economic development,” the principal said.

Launched in September 2015, the DTI awarded the BNAIS a complete set of bakery tools, machines, and equipment which are now fully installed at the bakeshop located at Barangay Poblacion, Bacuag. The SSF equipment included stationary deck oven, dough roller, cassava and coconut grinder, dough and cake mixer, bread carts and refrigerated cake showcase.

“The school’s bakery and bakeshop aim to provide the school a sustainable income-generating project which is aligned with the entrepreneurial and skills development of the students. This project will also equip the school’s Bread and Pastry Program offering for senior high students with state-of-the-art bakery equipment and facilities,” Mr. Escabal continued, adding that the bakery could also generate employment in the community.

“For months, operating the bakeshop greatly helped us train our students in technopreneural skills. The bakery had become our main attraction for guests visiting our school,” the school principal beamed.

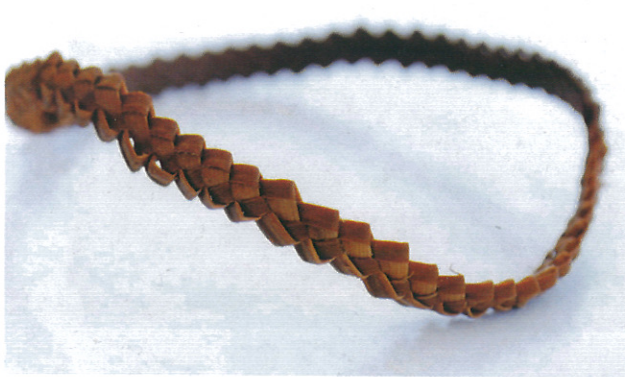
The bakery now employs a baker and two crews. Income generated from the bakery partly relieves parents and students in contributing financially to school projects.

“We look forward to generating more income with the BNAIS Bakeshop and expand the operation to nearby barangays so that we can develop more entrepreneurs from our Bread and Pastry Program,” Mr. Escabal said.

De Lara's eye and creativity pulls this vine out of the jungle to the posh malls in the city

The beauty in the handcrafted agsam

by Ronel M. Oibe
Photographer: Banawe B. Corvera



Tears fell from the eyes of Norma de Lara when she saw KC Concepcion, a famous movie and television personality, on the cover of a glossy magazine wearing an agsam neckpiece that Norma herself designed and made. For this sixtyish entrepreneur who weaves fashion accessories like she weaves her own dreams, it was the affirmation of a lifetime.

As she stared at the Cleopatra piece that adorned the neck of this showbiz goddess, Norma thought of her weavers in the obscure coastal barangay called Nurcia in Lanuza, Surigao del Sur. Mostly aboriginal and poor, these men, women, and children have in their fingertips artisanal skills that a century-old tradition has honed to perfection. But it was Norma's sense of design and innovation that imbued these traditional products a contemporary appeal.

And for that, she's quick to give the DTI credit. Asked which DTI assistance has the most impact on her, she said product development and trade fairs. The former opened her eyes to the vast possibilities of mixing agsam vine with other materials like beads, bones, and stones while the latter enabled her to enter significant markets and meet buyers-local traders and exporters.

It wasn't love at first sight for Norma and agsam. Although she was part of the weaving and fishing community of Nurcia, she just didn't see the money-making potential of this perennial vine that grew abundantly in the undulating terrain of Surigao del Sur. Back in the 70s, agsam bracelets and necklaces were not sold, they were exchanged with goods such as plates, glasses, and transistor radios the Muslim traders peddled.

In 1994, Norma joined the agsam weavers of Nurcia who organized into a cooperative and sold fashion accessories in cash to traders. But it was joining fairs organized by DTI that she saw the huge potential of agsam products. It was also the time when she realized that a product made practically at the foot of the mountains could make it to the halls of posh malls.



This gave her the idea to strike on her own, discouraged as she was by the stringent policy of the group with regard to pricing. "It was Joel Cruz who showed me the way to do product innovation," Norma said, referring to the designer that DTI had engaged for a selling fair held at the World Trade Center in 2004. Cruz gave her new designs that made her realize that combining agsam with other materials would make it doubly attractive. It was then that she started tweaking Cruz's designs on top of coming up with her own. In the process, she discovered the inner designer in her although Norma had a ready ear for her customers. "I always listen to their comments as my hint for innovation," she said. One time, Norma had a customer complaining about an agsam neckpiece whose lock was pricking her nape. Norma worked on it until she came up with a novel way to solve it.

"The greatest lesson I learned in this business is not to commit to something you cannot deliver," she said. This is her wellspring in establishing and strengthening a business relationship. To this day, she has yet to renege on a promise.

As entrepreneur, Norma is the biggest single job generator of her barangay and town. And for all this and more, she couldn't thank DTI enough. She's one to say that if not for DTI, she would have remained a weaver in Nurcia at the mercy of traders.

From the midst of the bamboo grooves an artisan rises

Cutting and scraping a path to success

by Violy Cortez

Photos by: Joel ArturTibaldo



Bamboo is a type of grass that grows tall in a very short span of time. This fascinating substance is admired the world over and considered a principal material for constructions, furniture, and crafts.

It grows abundantly in Bangued, Abra, where a great quantity of *kawayantinik*, *puser*, *talahib* and reed grows extensively in the upland community.

"It all started here," points out Carlo T. Balneg, referring to his workplace in Bangued. "At 14, I started working in the bamboo industry." Carlo began his career as an artisan by helping his father. He cut and scraped bamboo poles as a preparatory step for his father's work, which augmented their meager income from farming, the family's main occupation.

Going to college was not an option for the financially challenged Carlo so he joined In-Hand Abra Foundation, a non-government organization that produces bamboo-based products. For 10 years with the Foundation, he was able to acquire and enhance his production skills. Eventually, his exposure to new technologies through In-Hand's project engagement with the Cottage Industry Technology Center inspired him to move forward.

After 10 years with In-Hand Abra, Carlo decided to go solo. In 2004, he

established Carlo's Bamboo Crafts, Furniture & Furnishings and registered it with DTI. He continued to improve and hone his skills and his persistence soon paid off with an opportunity to supply local consolidators with his various products.

The introspective, forward-looking Carlo was always on the lookout for business opportunities. His company's operations, he surmised, will be hampered if it is limited to local consolidators. He decided to embark on an aggressive market search.

With the support of DTI, the soft-spoken entrepreneur started joining trade fairs in Abra, in neighboring provinces, at the region's famous IMPAKABSAT Trade Fair, and in Manila and Cebu. With this exposure and great product display, prominent firms from Manila became his regular buyers.

Carlo's clientele grew and business flourished. His company achieved a milestone when DTI linked it with 33.3 Exports, a Cebu-based company engaged in manufacturing woven baskets and other similar products for retail in the US. His company supplied exporters and grossed PHP4.7M in one year.

Carlo's entrepreneurship and craftsmanship earned recognitions and awards from various agencies and institutions such as the DTI, Department

of Labor and Employment, GO Negosyo and others. Today, Carlo's Bamboo Crafts, Furniture and Furnishings manufactures quality bamboo-based products like reclining chairs, foldable tables, bed trays, placemats, serving trays, dividers, and bamboo speakers, with wood furniture added to further expand its list of world-class products. •



A woman shows grit and determination to chip her way to success

Success comes with a crunch out of a heated pan

by Francis D. Pacio

Photos by: Joel ArturTibaldo



A resilient woman from Cordillera hitched her hopes on the saba, the most versatile of the many banana varieties. Saba can be cooked in many different ways and can also be used as an ingredient in different traditional dishes.

Erlinda Gasatan used to sell bananas to a trader who bought her lakatan, a premium table banana variety, but flatly refused the saba. “If you don’t want the saba, I can still earn money from them,” a frustrated Erlinda told the trader.

Determined to not eat her words, Erlinda stood her ground. With no food processing knowhow, she began making banana chips out of the saba using a regular kitchen frying pan. Her first customers were pupils of a nearby school who bought her greasy, cellophane-packed banana chips and, much to their chagrin, found them to be quite tough.

Her hometown of Conner is far from the government center but she visited an agency known to promote food businesses. She was advised to join an association to be eligible for government assistance.

Undeterred, the BS Social Work graduate continued to chip at what she knew was going to be a hit. She eventually had her recipe down to pat. To increase production, the frying pan was retired. Erlinda’s husband transformed an oil drum into an oven. It was crude, but it was what they could afford and served their intended purpose.

In order to improve her product, Erlinda turned to DTI for advice. Recommendations were made: packaging that offered longer shelf life and a computer-printed label to identify it as Gasatan Banana Chips.

“I was reluctant to heed the advice of DTI,” Erlinda states. “It meant money that my husband and I didn’t really have because our children were in school.” She closed her eyes and swallowed the bitter pill and considered the DTI’s advice anyway.

Those recommendations proved to be the impetus to introduce Erlinda’s product through numerous municipal, provincial and regional trade fairs. Then she was linked and advised to penetrate other local markets such as school canteens and bigger groceries in Apayao, Kalinga and Cagayan. She was also invited to attend some entrepreneurship development seminars. From conducting trial and error with a small frying pan, the couple now has a three-vat production capacity and diversified the production line that includes taro chips, chili paste, chili powder, their successful turmeric brew, and the most recent banana vinegar.

Wanting to share their blessings with their neighbors, the couple helped organize the Karikitan Food Association for raw material sourcing. Their collective venture is growing, and the members’ financial standing has considerably improved. These days the community shares in the success of the Gasatan couple.

A skin allergy led a young entrepreneur to set up a soap shop

The fruity smell of success

by Joel Arthur Tibaldo
Photos by: Joel ArturTibaldo



A relaxing scent is always a pleasant experience. Not surprisingly, discriminating consumers are partial to calming, restful, and comforting fragrances. This is the essence of the Natural Metaphors Body Products owned by the Ayupan family under the proprietorship of Lorna Jane who is in charge of operations and sales; daughter Melody and son Robinson handle market research and development.

Natural Metaphors began in Santiago, Isabela in 2003 out of Melody's need for a soap that addresses hypersensitivity to commercial products. At 15, Melody produced soaps with rice bran and coconut oil. With the advice of a chemist, she mixed the ingredients in kitchen pots with a small wooden box mold and made extra pieces as gifts for relatives and friends who, to her surprise, placed orders for their use and as gifts.

In 2007, the ayupan family moved to La Trinidad, Benguet. By this time, Melody had perfected her formula. New friends were asked to try her products and were impressed with the natural enzyme-based soap and enjoyed its exfoliating, moisturizing, and



rejuvenating qualities.

That year, Natural Metaphors was registered with DTI Benguet, who encouraged Melody to join trade fairs. The demand overwhelmed the family, who hired a small facility with contractual workers to manufacture the orders. They produced 300 pieces per month, expanding its product line with glutathione, collagen, salad bar, goat milk, oatmeal and strawberry variants.

With an initial capital of PHP10,000, the family sought additional funds from the Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation. A rich benefactor added a sizable amount, and the local government of La Trinidad provided additional financing. The funds were used to build a small production facility in their La Trinidad home.

Thanks to the Department of Science and Technology and DTI, Melody's company became more successful and won for her awards and recognition, including Go Negosyo's Ten Most Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs in 2009, a Special Award from Nokia and a BPI Family Bank Award.

From their product outlet at the Old Market Building on Km. 5, La Trinidad, Benguet, the Ayupans promoted their products in trade fairs such as the *Panagbenga*, *Impakabsat*, *Adivay*, *Lang-ay* and Strawberry Festival.

Today, the company has a minimum production of 2,000 pieces a month. Its 12 variants of charcoal and strawberry soaps are consistent top sellers. The company has 13 people under its direct employ plus an ever expanding network of dealers working in their direct selling program.

Forging a highland community's future one superhot piece of metal at a time

Blacksmiths smelting atop white clouds

by Imelda D. Kimayong
Photos by: Joel ArturTibaldo

B rains and brawn work hand-in-hand in physically taxing professions, particularly as a blacksmith. One holds a piece of metal with one hand and pound it with a sledgehammer using the other to craft a tool for use by farmers and butchers in their daily trade. The act is certainly physically exacting particularly when meeting increasing demands and the blacksmith has only his plain muscles and a pounding block to work on.

In the remote mountainous town of Kiangnan, Ifugao, brute human force is employed and blacksmiths sweat it out to bend, twist, and form iron bars and sheets into its intended shape. Time was when only a handful of men produced a few bolos, sickles, machetes, and spearheads on a daily basis at the HOJAP Multi-Purpose Cooperative blacksmith shop.

With the mechanized tools and equipment provided by DTI under the Shared Services Facility (SSF) program, the group of blacksmiths led by Roland Bongtiwon produced greater volume from an average of six pieces of assorted bolos and knives a day to 33 pieces. This is a 450 percent increase. Today the project has nine regular workers and engages the services of students during weekends to install wooden scabbard knitted with rattan splits, which is typical in Ifugaos. The production of these scabbards was made easier with the SSF circular teeth saw and router, a tool also used for carpentry and woodworking.

With cutting edge technology, the blacksmiths can now standardize the sizes and shapes and follow other specifications provided by clients. They can also translate the given product designs into the desired prototypes with more precision and less wastage through to the efficient use of tools such as acetylene, forging hammer, sanders, grinders, polishers, and added accessories.

Prior to the arrival of the SSF machines, their market outlets were limited grossing only an average of PHP20,000 to PHP40,000 a week. Today, the cooperative's market goes beyond Ifugao and the Cordillera region with about PHP110,000 worth of goods a week. The group participates in DTI and Department of Science and Technology organized provincial, regional, and national trade fairs to promote their products, getting an opportunity to meet local and international buyers with the options of repeat orders.

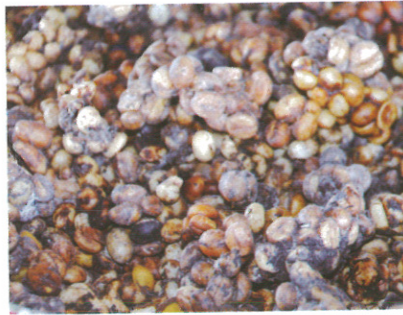
High above the clouds in a town called Kiangnan, modern-day blacksmiths are in constant pursuit of excellence, with the end-goal of reaching industrialized status one mighty strike at a time.



Confidence. Determination. Fearlessness.

Lady Tames the Wildcat

by Aurelia Sanet
Photos by: Joel Artur Tibaldo



An acquired taste, a strong constitution, an intense curiosity... these are three of the reasons why there are people more audaciously bold than the others. In the case of drinking coffee from beans that have gone through the rear end of a wild cat, one might have to close one's eyes and shut one's imagination or dare the rest of the world to be as open and adventurous.

The cloud-kissed highlands between Tanudad and Tabuk City in Kalinga is a known habitat of the Musang (Philippine Wildcat, a.k.a. civet), an animal responsible for initiating the production of one of the most expensive coffee in the world.

During harvest season, Zita Balzinaw Degay of the Naneng tribe and proprietress of Magallaya Mountain Specialty Coffee, used to buy coffee beans that she sells to Nestlé Philippines. Her sari-sari store served as a trading post with farmers exchanging their produce for basic commodities such as sugar, salt, sardines, and other goods bartered as payment for their coffee.

In 2009, Zita represented Gawidan Women's Organization at SM Baguio Trade Expo organized by the Department of Labor and Employment. In this event, she learned about the high price of Musang coffee and decided to look closely into this business opportunity as it was common in the Magallaya Mountain and other forested areas of Upper Tabuk.



Determined to have her exotic coffee packed and be accepted in specialty markets, Zita sought the assistance of Rural Micro Enterprise Promotion Program. After the launching of Magallaya Mountain Specialty Coffee in the Patawid Agro-Industrial Fair during the Tabuk City Foundation Day in June 2009, she was introduced to the One-Town One-Product Luzon Island Fair in SM MegaMall. Civet coffee sold out before the fair ended, generating PHP108,000 in gross sales. At the IMPAKABSAT in Festival Mall in 2010, her sales grossed PHP350,000.

Zita represented the region in the Coffee Origin Activity in Greenbelt

Makati in 2012 and booked a PHP700,000 order from a prominent coffee shop. She reinvested the money in processing and packaging equipment and constructed a building for her business.

From an initial capitalization of PHP5,000 her business is now worth PHP800,000. She employs six regulars plus six more during peak season. Zita's Food and FDA-compliant half a million-peso coffee-processing center in Bagumbayan in Tabuk City is close to completion. A 4x4 Ford Ranger pickup truck enhances Zita's mobility.

How to tame the wildcat? Ask Zita Balzinaw Degay.

In this café, coffee lovers can enjoy their brew while waiting for their laundry. But wait ...

IS THAT A GOLDFISH IN YOUR COFFEE?

by Juliet Lucas and Joel Arthur Tibaldo
Photos by: Joel Artur Tibaldo



Each one of us has our preferred brew. Some want it really strong, others temper it with milk, and the rest have it halfway. Some like it black, some put in cream, and the available choices for sugar can in itself be bewildering. But a goldfish? Oh, that's just the name of a coffee shop in Bontoc, Mountain Province owned by Gemma Ngelangel, the Gold Fish Café.

Gemma was one of the resource speakers tapped by DTI during the "Coffee 101-Cum Cross Visit" held in Sagada, Mountain Province in September of 2014. The event was a gathering of coffee industry stakeholders from Luzon and Mindanao.

In her talk, Gemma emphasized the importance of start-up capital, location, people, branding, and menu offered in a coffee shop. She impressed on her audience that every café owner must know how the business operates inside and out.

"As a proprietor and manager, you really need to know what your employees are supposed to be doing and what are expected of them," Gemma asserts. "You and your baristas should not just know how to make coffee but should also drink and enjoy it. You need to appreciate coffee by heart."

A pioneer in rural Bontoc, Gold Fish Café goes against the misconception that cafés will not thrive in rural areas because they are more appropriate in urban areas. Gold Fish Café serves locally roasted coffee, coffee from other provinces, and imported coffee, always with partiality on the advantages of local coffee by pointing out its freshness, aroma, and flavor.

Gemma's Gold Fish Café helps demonstrate what the coffee business is all about, emphasizing quality at all times. In fact, it has become a demo facility for coffee brewing, providing free internship for young people who want to train and become baristas.

To expand their product offering and involve more people in her community, Gemma encourages other processors to supply them with products like cakes, pastries, and vegetables. She also serves tourists by providing another essential service especially for long-stay guests: laundry. Oh yes, her laundry shop is named Gold Fish Laundry.

A known supporter of civic activities especially those that deals with environmental programs such as the Clean and Green drive in Bontoc, today, Gemma sits as member of their coffee council and is tapped as a volunteer resource person or service provider for coffee trainings in various parts of the country.



This one is not for the birds, although it can inspire you to soar

This BIRD Club Flies High

by Juliet Lucas
Photos by: Joel ArturTibaldo



Walking in the clouds is an everyday experience in Bila, Bauko, Mountain Province. It is a heady experience, especially for the uninitiated. For its residents, however, it has become a fact of life – the cold temperature is best tempered by a hot drink, preferably freshly brewed coffee.

One night, a group of young women came together for a chat before calling it a day. Over coffee, they talked about their individual and collective lives in a simple community. Appreciating the brew that warmly embraced them from inside out, they talked about the local coffee industry and toyed with the idea of getting into the business literally from the ground up.

The idea has been in the backburner for quite a while. Three of the women attended DTI's Coffee 101 training way back in 2011 in Baguio City. From there, they developed a Back Home Plan to consolidate and trade coffee beans.





They agreed that it was an idea whose time has come, and the Bila Rural Development Club, otherwise known as BiRD Club, was born. They ventured into coffee processing, which was, in the beginning, a challenging process because they did not have their own equipment. Determined to fight the odds, the group engaged the roasting services of an establishment in the nearby municipality of Sagada.

The expense incurred did not make the venture financially viable, prompting them to seek assistance from concerned government agencies, particularly DTI, whose Shared Service

Facility (SSF) enabled the BiRD Club to procure needed facilities and equipment. They went into a partnership with the Dang-dang-ay Di Ibila Multi-Purpose Cooperative, an organization where most Bird Club members were also a part of.

The SSF's launching in 2014 opened a world of opportunities, providing roasting services for individuals, SMEs and organizations in Bauko and the nearby municipality of Tadian.

Today, the BiRD Club offers its premium coffee locally as well as in

outlets such as Health 100 and Porta Vaga in Baguio City. The club has also expanded its product line with the nutritious blend of insumix, wine, and peanuts.

The club's officers serve as resource persons during training and seminars on coffee production, sharing their expertise and experience with farmers, students and other organizations. The BiRD Club soars high and has gained recognition not just locally but has earned its wings internationally with the visit of the prestigious UNISG-University of Gastronomic Sciences from Italy.

Converting idle time to more productive endeavors

When moms get together

by Tyronne Glenn C. Lawey
Photos by: Joel Artur Tibaldo



A lot of our movies have depicted women, mostly mothers, getting together and talking about other people's lives spreading rumors and false information. But then again, life is not a movie.

For members of the Bayyo Mommies Organization, idle time is not just better spent but best spent in productive, income-generating activities. These young mothers formed an organization so that members can learn new skills and engage in financially rewarding activities.

Through the DTI and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and its Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), members of the organization were immersed in various production skills trainings that include veggie noodles processing, veggie bread processing, and basic business management skills including bookkeeping, pricing and costing. Then in 2014, through the Bayyo Multi-Purpose Cooperative, the group became a recipient of the Shared Service Facility (SSF) Program of DTI.

The processing center was put up in a member's house and the organization started production of squash veggie noodles for the local market. The group also found an outlet in Quezon City where a large number of their towns-folks reside.

The members of the Bayyo Mommies Organization are united not only in increasing their numbers but also in expanding their influence and widening their reach. Today, they are optimizing their production facilities acquired through the SSF Program by engaging in vegetable bread making, and assisting the local farmers by increasing the marketability of locally grown vegetables such as squash, carrots and camote. They also ensure that products are always displayed prominently during municipal trade fairs in the province.

As they continued to grow and enjoy additional earnings, the club had set its sights on securing a License to Operate from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be able to fully expand their operational capabilities. The members sought the assistance of DAR-DTI-CARP for the construction of a new building and the request was approved with the proviso proviso that the group provide the land where the center will be built. Responding to the challenge, one of the members donated a portion of her property and construction of the center began in January 2016.

As the Bayyo Mommies Organization continues to expand its business, mothers in nearby communities also found a productive way of spending the otherwise idle time.

A unique mold and expedient service, make John Carlo Creations,
a head taller in its field

PVC molded bags anyone?

by Joseph H. Dela Peña and Genesis V. Paez
Photographer: Genesis Paez



Back in 2003, Carlos Yu established John Carlo Creations, a bag manufacturing business which specializes in using PVC (polyvinyl chloride) molds to produce their famous molded bags. They are the sole and pioneer manufacturer of PVC molds in the country.

Yu, an entrepreneur with 30 years of experience, first started to go in business when a friend gave him an idea to produce thermoplastic molds to improve the quality of molded bags instead of using the traditional paper-mâché molds with wire at the edges. "I was given an opportunity to go into business and saw the potential of thermoplastic molds. With continuous innovation we were able to develop our current PVC molds," said Yu when asked on his beginnings.



With the ups and downs of his journey in business, he is grateful to the assistance of DTI and of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions. "I am thankful for the efforts of DTI on encouraging and helping our business and our fellow small entrepreneurs," stated Yu. They were assisted on product promotion through free participation to trade fairs. They were also exposed to international market through international fairs.

Now the business is able to produce around 50-60 bags a day and employs 20-25 workers during off and peak

season, respectively. They have also accumulated more than 500 shapes of PVC molds in their course of business. "*Mabilis kami mag-produce ng sample.* (We are quick in producing samples). Aside from the quality of our products, our customers like expediency," says Yu. They are regular suppliers in malls and boutique stores while their international markets include USA, Europe, South America, and Asia Pacific.

Yu envisions his company to be stable and prosperous in the future. He plans to continue to share his success to others. As an entrepreneur, he believes in doing his share of social responsibility by giving back. Yu also advises future entrepreneurs to be daring and not afraid to take risks, also to have "faith in God who is the source of everything." In parting, he has this proverb to share, "In everything you do, put God first. He will direct your path and crown your effort with success."



As a child, Jo S. Santos wanted to please Santa with her good behavior Cheers and success from Santa Claus

by Joseph H. Dela Peña and Genesis V. Paez

Photographer: Genesis Paez

Does Santa Claus really reward well-behaved children? Jo S. Santos, as a child, was told by her mother to behave so that Santa Claus will reward her. The saying guided her until she reached adulthood. It was the smiling Santa that also inspired her to put up the Christmas Factory. By putting up the Christmas Factory, she is able to bring the Christmas spirit to anyone who buys her merchandise.

Santos owns the Christmas Factory together with her husband, Tony Boy, and is located at the corner of F. Jhocson and A.H. Lacson streets in Sampaloc, Manila. The store grabs your attention due to the huge iconic figures that are displayed in front of their store but are changed once the displays are sold. The Christmas Factory showcases different kinds of Christmas ornaments and Santa figures varying in sizes from giant to small sizes. The store opens as early as September 1 to bring Christmas happiness and cheer to their customers.

The business started in 1998 when Santos had to give up her school bus service when she developed high blood

pressure and was advised by her husband to stop working. With lots of time in her hands, she used her artistry and craftsmanship to create reindeers and Santa Clause out of *papier mâché*s. "We did not expect that it would generate a lot of attention," said Santos, and from there on orders poured in.

The Santos couple is thankful for the support of DTI for helping them in opening new markets and promotion of their products. On the other hand, with the help of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions or CITEM their products were displayed at the World Trade Center attracting the international markets. "The DTI was really helpful because we were exposed to international buyers which eventually became our regular customers," says Santos. Now they currently employ 10 to 15 laborers during production period and have regular clients from Cebu, Davao, and Japan to name a few.

"We really want to share our blessings. It really feels good if you are able to help and give happiness to others like a real-life Santa," says Jo Santos. And the spirit lives on.

Resilient, flexible, practical, and abundant

Bamboo, the grass of hope

by Ferdinand O. Angeles, Joseph H. Dela Peña and Genesis V. Paez
 Photographer: Genesis Paez

When Dondi Fajardo, an engineer, retired early in 2005 from the Energy Development Corporation, he spent his separation pay to buy a sugarcane farm in Tuy, Batangas where he, with his wife Jeanne, established the Escovado Trading that dealt with cane sugar and juice. Although his business was doing well, Dondi was always on his toes for opportunities. He took note of the bamboo that grew in abundance in their farm. "What can be done with these bamboos?" was the thought that lingered in his mind.

One day, while browsing the internet for answers, he came across the Cottage Industry Technology Center (CITC). Wasting no time, he visited CITC where he learned about the many potentials of bamboo. He also learned about the Center's MSME development services particularly its Shared Service Facility (SSF) program that provides assistance to start-ups and existing enterprises. Leaving the center that day, Dondi was firm that his Escovado Trading would be producing engineered bamboo (e-bamboo).

Escovado acquired a CITC-designed and fabricated primary bamboo processing equipment such as a pole cutter and a twin rip saw and installed in his farm in Batangas where four CITC-trained workers and Dondi himself, processed bamboo slats. These slats



were delivered and processed further to planks in a workshop in Marikina where it was sold to a supplier of writing tables for schools in Muntinlupa.

But Fajardo wanted to do more. He envisioned his company to be known in the industry as the leading producer of quality e-bamboo products. He attended the DTI-organized Bamboo Congress 2012 that helped him expand his business network and opened his eyes to more opportunities in the world of bamboo. A few months later he closed Escovado and instead established All aBout Kawayan 101 (ABK 101) Corporation. ABK 101, he said represented "the beginning."

Guided by CITC experts, ABK 101 was able to prototype their own product designs. One of these, a chair with a high backrest, was judged as the Most Innovative Product at the 2013 Sikap Pinoy National Handicraft Fair. ABK's new prototypes were also brought to the Manila Furnishings and Apparel Manufacturers' Exchange or Manila's FAME.

The project consumed huge quantity of slats but the company's stock was ready. Earlier, this intrepid engineer acquired a 3-in-1 machine (jointer/thicknesser/circular saw) and a jointer planer following CITC specifications to beef up his slats production. He knew that it takes time to process and source

slats, the main raw materials for most e-bamboo products. He must have a head start in case big or rush orders come in. His instinct was right and with the Manila FAME exposure, orders poured in.

His initial successes in the design and manufacturing field convinced Fajardo that bamboo is really the grass of hope. The fame and fortune it brought him is as sweet as or maybe even sweeter than sugar.

CITC, now an attached agency of the DTI, continued to provide assistance to the company. The company now provides direct employment to six workers and a handful of farmers with more job opportunities once its bamboo cultivars are ready for planting in Batangas. Even more jobs will be created when its new products are ready for the production line. In 2015, ABK 101's value of goods processed using DTI's SSF was estimated at PHP500,000. By all accounts, it is not an impressive figure, but Dondi has an on-going advocacy against global warming by using and planting bamboo. It provides jobs that feed the families of his employees. This is enough reason to make him feel like the most successful entrepreneur in the world.



Government assistance such as product development and new food technology helps VFC come up with more delicious and tangy citrus products

The versatility of the all-natural juice

by Joseph H. Dela Peña and Genesis V. Paez

Photographer: Genesis Paez



National Food Fair. “We are already set-up as a business fully compliant in terms of permits and licenses. We have also started to develop our own packaging. We are thankful for the government’s assistance in marketing our products. We were encouraged to participate in DTI trade fairs and events to introduce our products and to meet buyers,” says Nancy Ordas, general manager of VFC Condiments.

VFC was also assisted by the Department of Science and Technology on the latest food technologies where the business gained new knowledge in processing their products. Ordas also commended the government for being more coordinated in their operations and programs.

Now Willybee *kalamansi* and *dalandan* extracts can be bought from different malls and grocery stores.

When asked about their vision for their product, Ordas had this to say, “We want our customers to know that our products have a variety of use. It is not just limited to juice products for drinking. It can also be used for cooking and as a salad dressing.”

For their next venture, they look forward into expanding their line of products to complement the use of their delicious *kalamansi* and *dalandan* extracts.

VFC Condiments International Corporation is a corporation operating in Pasig City which is known for producing their Willybee *kalamansi* (lime) and *dalandan* (orange) extracts with honey, all natural, and have no artificial preservatives.

The Department of Agriculture and DTI assisted VFC Condiments in marketing their products. Both agencies have helped them participate in local and international trade fairs like the



Kakanin on top of shakes and smoothies The tastes of summer

by Joseph H. Dela Peña and Genesis V. Paez
Photographer: Genesis Paez



Kakanin, various desserts made of sticky rice, is derived from the word kanin (rice) and is one of the most beloved and cultural desserts of Filipinos. Aging's Food Delights brings these *kakanin* to life through their unique and tasty products.

Aging's Food Delights started in 2013 with Agapita Mercado as the entrepreneur and her husband Gregorio as the only employees. "We started this business with only the two of us making kakanin," said Mercado. Now the business employs about eight workers and has over 15 different types of *kakanin* products.

Mercado is thankful for the assistance of DTI and CITEM which helped her business grow. Through seminars and consultations, she was able to learn proper food handling and safety, and learned simple cooking techniques that extended the shelf life of her products.

The DTI and its export promotion arm, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions or CITEM, also helped her business grow by inviting Agapita's Food Delights to participate in trade fairs. Mercado was able to significantly expand her market by participating in the International Food Exhibit or IFEX and the National Food Fair.

With her success, this businesswoman is also trying to share her blessing from the success of her business by employing single moms and unemployed housewives. “It feels great to help people who are determined and make something out of life,” says Mercado.

This housewife-turned-entrepreneur also keeps up with the times by expanding her line of products without veering away from the original flavor of her kakanin. She now offers shakes called “Tastes of Summer” which are topped with a dollop or sliver of *kakanin*.

She plans to make her products available by putting up branches in other locations. “We are now looking for other places where we can sell in other areas. I want to be involved

closely in each of these branches because it’s important that we maintain the quality of our products. That’s the reason why customers keep coming back,” says Mercado when asked for her future plans.





Shared service facility equipment boosts creativity and productivity Incremental additions for supplemental incomes

by Joseph H. Dela Peña, Michelle B. Maramag and Genesis V. Paez
Photographer: Genesis Paez

With over a hundred members, the Triumph Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperative (TEMCO) used to own 13 sewing machines way back in 2009. Two years later, they started to sew merchandize such as undergarments (panties and brassieres) and scrub suits as uniforms to help augment their water refilling station business.

In 2012, they ventured into producing eco bags, baby dresses, and bags. For the next two years, they expanded their bag with designs that range from backpacks, sling bags to handbags. But with only 13 sewing machines, TEMCO was having a hard



time fulfilling with bulk orders. Because of this, they even had to decline two orders, one for 17,000 eco bags and another for 48,000 tote bags. They

had the seamstresses but not enough sewing machines.

TEMCO knew its limitation. With an aging complement of only 13 sewing machines, their output was limited. They sought the assistance of DTI for its Shared Service Facilities (SSF) project. Fortunately, the project was approved and TEMCO was given 11 specialized sewing machines on July 2, 2015.

TEMCO readily expanded their product lines to include t-shirts with logo. With new machines and no maintenance costs, operating expenses went down while production volumes



went up. Today, TEMCO has 20 hi-speed machines, half of which are used for production while the other half is used for finishing requirements.

Workers and volunteers of TEMCO are very happy and appreciative of the benefits brought by the SSF, not only in terms of increased production output

that also boosted the bottom line. The SSF project also brought value-added services such as creating patterns and design on textiles, and also increase in the level of expertise and exposures the project allowed workers to attain. With new technology, members were learning new ways in producing bags, garments, and undergarments.

TEMCO is not remiss in its social responsibilities. The SSF is also open to entrepreneurs in nearby communities. Out-of-school youths are encouraged to earn by learning how to sew and become affiliated with TEMCO's team of workers.

Improving lives in the ascending road less travelled

WEAVING A BRIGHTER FUTURE UP THE MOUNTAINS OF KABANKALAN

by David Israel F. Sinay
 Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



Dark, bleak, and unpromising are three words that commonly describe the future of the people in the hinterlands. Basic services barely reach them. Farming is mostly slash-and-burn.

Father Brian Gore, an Australian missionary priest, observed how people in these communities leave to live in places that are more comfortable and convenient and where job opportunities exist even if working conditions are unjust.

Gore lived and worked in the area since the 1970s. In 2000, along with some of his fellows, they established the Negros Nine Human Development Foundation, Inc.

In 2011, DTI and the Fiber Industry Development Authority approached the Foundation to help pioneer abaca weaving as an economic opportunity for residents of Sitio Bantulinao in Brgy. Tan-awan, Kabankalan City. Located 24

kilometers from the city proper, it is a two-hour hike on a fine day and longer on rainy days. It costs PHP150 to hire a *habal-habal*, a mode of transportation using a motorcycle.

DTI trained the weavers introducing them to looms, weaving techniques, and product designs that integrate polyester threads with abaca and other materials in making placemats, table runners, shawls, handkerchiefs, and headbands.

The weaving business did not have a smooth start because there was not enough supply of abaca. The priests feared that they would lose their trained workers, admitting that maintaining staffing requirements was a challenge. The Foundation worked to resolve the problem and proceeded to improve their facilities. At present, there are nine full-time weavers and two-part-time weavers. Three of these weavers are men.

The products were displayed at the

city center and they have continuously joined DTI-initiated trade fairs, including the recently concluded Panaad sa Negros where they were able to generate PHP27,000 in sales.

The weaving industry has brought progress to Sitio Bantulinao. It inspired people to dream. Marialyn Abria, a college junior, is taking up Education. She is the only one of four siblings who reached college. Jelyn Sualog works as a part-time weaver and is about to earn her degree in Information Technology. Elena B. Tabo-tabo, 75, recalled that prior to the establishment of the facility and the introduction of weaving in their community, most of them would work in sugar cane farms or haciendas.

Recently, the local government put up a school in the area and paved the seven-kilometer ascending road, making transport and mobility easier for the people and their produce.

Artisans in the farms create crafts for the export market

THE SERENDIPITY OF GOOD INTENTIONS

by David Israel F. Sinay
Photographer: David Israel F. Sinay



There are times in our lives when our positive actions, such as extending a limb to people we value becomes a collective effort lifting several individuals, sometimes even an entire community, all at once.

This is what transpired when a livelihood venture, Christina Gaston's Hacienda Crafts Company in Manapla, Negros Occidental, intended to simply provide additional income to a community of farm workers, became a global business enterprise.

"We knew we could not employ everyone in the hacienda," Christina Gaston recalls. "We looked for something they could do at home at their own pace on a piecemeal basis."

Established in 1991, the company creates tabletop items such as candleholders, trays, placemats, and table runners using locally sourced materials such as coconut twigs, *buri* midribs, capiz shells, handwoven fabrics, abaca, raffia fibers, and bamboo. The farmworkers-turned-artisans crafted these products with meticulous attention to details.



To penetrate their target market, Hacienda Crafts Company participated in the DTI trade fairs. "Market access is crucial, that's why we participate in trainings offered by DTI," she emphasized. "We developed our product and took advantage of the Barangay Micro Business Enterprise to become a community-based manufacturer."

Using locally sourced materials, the company highlights the importance of sustainability and links up with other communities in the area as a source of materials. "We connect with the grassroots communities for materials because they need market access the most," Christina explains. "We make that our strength."

The company started with just five

and now has 300 weavers and families in different communities.

Dee Gelisanga, 36, a weaver who worked in the company for the past four years, said the additional income she earns augments her profits from selling rice cakes. She eagerly looks forward to receiving bulk orders because of the bigger income.

Josefina Portillano, 56, is one of the pioneers in the company. She appreciates the opportunity to work for Hacienda Crafts Company for the past 23 years because it has enabled her to send her two daughters to school.

From the initial tabletop items, Hacienda Crafts Company has expanded its product line with furniture and furnishings, including small accent pieces such as side tables, and stools. It also started using swathes of fabric in its product line, 30 percent of which now goes to the export market.





Poor man's sugar brings wealth **Brown Gold**

by Maribel Sumanoy and Jojisilia Villamor
Photographers: Maribel Sumanoy and Jojisilia Villamor

Negros Island, where the biggest sugarcane plantations in the country are found, has always been synonymous with sugar.

For generations now, the economy of Negros has depended on sugar. The sugar industry, tied to the vagaries of the international market, has been through booms and busts.

But one sugar planter in Negros Oriental manages to keep his head above water by going into niche marketing.

Alejandro Florian Alcantara, chairman and president of Raw Brown Sugar Milling Co. Inc. (RBSMCI), has been selling muscovado, also known as “poor man’s sugar,” to Asian and European markets. Muscovado is unrefined cane sugar in which molasses is not removed. His sugar milling company in Barangay Igbalanac, Pamplona has become the third



company to penetrate the export market out of 300 muscovado producers in the country today.

Alcantara has always acknowledged the contribution of the government to the success of the company. “Although we provided our corporate vision of becoming ‘One of the World’s top producers of high and export quality muscovado,’ it was the government who made this vision possible. As a start-up company in 2010, we did not have the

technology and capacity to access the international market as well as enough financial resources to make our vision a reality.”

Shortly after it started operating, RBSMCI participated in the International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Manila sponsored by Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), the export promotion arm of the DTI.

Alcantara recalls, “Through the food safety experts of the Philippine Trade Training Center and CITEM, we were given the opportunity to showcase our product at the IFEX in May 2010 in Manila. Before end of the year, CITEM gave us the opportunity to join two more international shows, the ASEAN Japan Center in Tokyo in October 2010 and at the ASEAN Korea Center in Seoul in November of the same year. Since then, every year, in partnership with CITEM, we never fail to participate in all IFEX



Manila food exhibitions, other international food shows like Anuga, Sial, Taipei Food, Foodex, Gulf Foods, San Francisco Winter Fancy Food Shows, and food exhibitions.”

Alcantara pointed out that the CITEM partnership gave them the opportunity to export 95 percent of their production to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, US, Australia, Germany, Russia, and Hong Kong while five percent is sold in the local markets, such as S&R, Landmark, and Gaisano supermarkets and other local outlets.

Abroad, Alcantara learned that what most people here considered to be a “poor man’s sugar” was actually a special commodity in developed countries.

Unlike refined sugar, which is subject to fluctuating prices in the world market, the price of muscovado has been stable over the past several years.

Alcantara’s new contacts abroad enabled him to start exporting “organic certified muscovado” immediately after his products first rolled off the factory in February 2010. To date, exports to Japan, Korea, Russia, and Taiwan account for 90 percent of RBSMCI’s production, while only 10 percent is distributed locally.

Alcantara says, “We maintain a healthy partnership with the government which continuously paves the way to more successes and our way to achieving our vision. As a matter of fact, we continue to partner with CITEM in marketing effectively our new products.”

Success stories like Alcantara’s may be an exception to the rule in the local sugar industry but his story captures the effectiveness of DTI-organized trade fairs which have already benefitted several SMEs in introducing new products by reaching customers cost effectively and by generating sales.

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