

CHANGED



SPECIAL WOMEN'S MONTH ISSUE:

WOMEN MAKE CHANGE

PBSP features stories of empowerment, leadership and transformation





Philippine Business for Social Progress is the largest business-led NGO at the forefront of strategic corporate citizenship and business sector leadership, contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Established in 1970, PBSP remains a consultant and partner of choice of companies and donors.

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With a proven track record, PBSP provides end-to-end services in development consulting which include project and grants management, events and backroom management.



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ABOUT THE COVER



In this Women's Month issue of CHANGED which carries the theme "Women Make Change" of the Philippine Commission on Women, PBSP pays tribute to its inspiring female beneficiaries who rise above poverty and discrimination to create a better future for their families; its dedicated service providers who go beyond their duties to help those in need; and its board of trustees and top company executives who continue to create meaningful work in their industries.

The magazine "CHANGED" features stories of inspiring people in social development whose lives were changed either through their involvement in projects undertaken by PBSP with its member-companies, partners, and donors, or through interventions in the communities we serve. The A in "CHANGED," is represented by the delta sign (Δ) which is also a mathematical symbol for change.

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Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Bangsamoro Communities

Recent government data cited by www.philippines.oxfam.org reveals that the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) still has the highest poverty incidences among families. Married women in the region still have the highest unmet need for family planning. Because of this, there are only one out of 10 delivery births by a skilled professional, while the number of deliveries in health facilities remained bleak with less than one-sixth of the National Capital Region's.

To address this glaring concern, the European Union (EU) through Oxfam funded the Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARCHES, a five-year project jointly implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation (AMDFI), Pinay Kilos (Pink), Tarbilang Foundation, and the United Youth of the Philippines - Women, Inc.

ARCHES aims to contribute to poverty reduction and improved well-being of populations in the Philippines, particularly in the ARMM, through better and more equitable access to health services. Specifically, it aims to improve the availability of and access to basic Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services for underserved women and young people in 29 municipalities in the five provinces of ARMM. To date, more than 350,000 individuals have been provided by life-saving information and services through the project.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN NUMBERS



322

BHWs trained



139

nurses and
midwives trained



38

doctors and local
health authorities
participated



29

health facilities
provided with
equipment

350,091

individuals reached
through IECs



29

core groups
formed

15,693

availed SRH services
(women – **11,294**;
men – **2,347**; youth
– **2,025**)



2

medical conferences
conducted



5

types of training
modules reproduced



1,567

individuals (members) of
core group in **29** cities and
municipalities engaged



546

core group
leaders
engaged



100

opinion leaders and
Muslim religious leaders
(MRLs) engaged



300

facilitators
engaged

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GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES

Sometimes, it is not the lack of health services that prevents women from accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Cultural traditions, religious beliefs, family concerns, or their remote locations also affect their decision to avail of the services. But these factors did not stop women from welcoming these opportunities to change their lives for the better.

In this section about the ARCHES Project which was implemented in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, we will share with you empowering stories of women who defied rules and expectations to become wiser and healthier mothers.

STOPPING AT 10

A mother of 10 who experienced the difficulties of having many children chooses what's best for her family

Delia Radia, a health center volunteer in Marantao, Lanao del Sur is 44 years old and has 10 children.

She got married at the age of 21 and immediately got pregnant. Her firstborn in 1994 was soon followed by a series of pregnancies in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2014.

"I believe it's not hard to have many children as long as there is enough spacing between pregnancies. I have 10 children and I think it is enough. I do not want to give birth anymore. But my husband still wants to add more. I told him that I am already tired," shared Radia.

Coming from a poor family, Radia would try to make ends meet with the meager pay that she and her husband, who works as a carpenter and farmer, make.

"Having many children could get expensive especially when they get to college because there will be a lot of expenses. My older children take care of the little ones when I go to work. When I get home, the older children would then go to school. We take turns in looking after the little ones. But sometimes, nobody is left in the house to look after them that is why some get sick of fever, cough, colds and asthma which entails more expenses for medicine," she revealed.

Radia's youngest child even got sick of broncho-pneumonia. The doctor said the child needed special attention. She realized then that she needed to spend more time for her family.

FAMILY PLANNING IS THE KEY

Radia already considered taking contraceptives when her children were only nine but she kept on forgetting about it. The good thing about it was that her husband had been supportive of her decision to finally take it this time.

"At first, we tried to use condoms and contraceptive injection. Since I am scared of needles, I tried to explore birth control implant. Injection and implant have the same effect. But injection is done monthly while implant is done every three years. If I want to give birth again, I can choose not to re-insert it. But I really do not want to give birth anymore, I am already old," she said.

Radia was able to avail of the birth control implant in 2014 from a local doctor at the Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO) of Lanao del Sur in Marawi City.

"The birth control implant is free and effective. It is also hassle-free because I do not need to drink pills daily or take scheduled monthly injections. With implants, I do not feel anything wrong. I just feel normal," she said.

ASSISTANCE FROM THE ARCHES PROJECT

When it was time to replace her old implant, Radia was lucky enough to receive the assistance of the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao." The project was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam, and was implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

"Through the ARCHES Project, I was able to have my first implant removed and have a new one inserted. They did it in our health center which is nearer to my house. I spent nothing for it. They just recorded my name, age and basic information so they can monitor when it will be replaced if I decide to avail it again," she added.

GIVING BACK

Radia and her husband's decision to practice family planning now through the use of a contraceptive, enabled her to take better care of herself and her children.

"My life became easier. I can now go anywhere. I can also do what I need to do like household chores and volunteer work at the health center. Unlike before, I am stuck in the house



because I need to look after my little children. Now, I have more time not only for my family and myself but also for the community. Now that there is a measles outbreak in our place, I even help as a volunteer in our health center," she said.

Birth control is an issue in Islam because it prevents the spread of faith. But Radia, who is a Muslim, explains to fellow mothers that it is not preventing mothers from giving birth. It only promotes spacing between pregnancies so mothers can recover well and have more time in taking care of their children. There is already a fatwa (or a ruling on a point of Islamic law) about family planning.

"Sometimes, the health center staff would even request me to share my experiences with fellow mothers in availing birth control implants. Other mothers should not be afraid of it. There are no side effects. It cost PhP8,000 pesos in private hospitals but it is free in the health center. The health center staff will interview and assess your need for family planning and guide you to make an informed choice. Should you choose implant, it is really safe," Radia said.

DELIA RADIA, a beneficiary of the ARCHES Project, advocates family planning to fellow Muslim mothers.



SURAIDA TALIB, a mother of 14, learns the value of family planning and giving proper care to her family.

A TALE OF TWO MOTHERS

Two mothers put an end to unprepared pregnancies through the ARCHES interventions

In this story, a mother and her daughter-in-law share how they are rising from the challenges of poverty, having many offspring and the death of a child with the help of life-saving information through the ARCHES Project.

Choosing to be a better mom

In the desolate, war-trodden town of Maguindanao, it has become common for young women to have large families despite being unprepared—all for a chance at survival.

Suraida Talib was nine years old when she lost her father and was 10 when her mother abandoned her to relatives. To survive, she was married off to a 40-year-old at age 12 by her relatives' stern wish.

"Because of poverty and my relatives' wish, I was forced to marry him or else my family will disown me," shared the 38-year-old from Barangay Kakal in Ampatuan, Maguindanao.

With her husband's meager income as a jeepney driver matched to her immaturity that came with her age, Talib ended up still having a hard time surviving. The challenge had become tougher because she now had a family she needed to keep afloat. To make things worse, she lost her husband to

an accident, which forced her to start back from scratch.

Hence, she decided to marry another man who could help her deal with the load. However, her life only got tougher since her husband had no stable job to depend on. Since she married young, she would get pregnant two to three months after giving birth. Before she knew it, she already has 14 children at age 38.

"I had a hard time taking care of my children. I didn't know who to prioritize and how to provide their daily needs. They even had to take turns in eating. When I gave them a bath, they would all be together until they could do it themselves," she revealed.

It was only through a series of life-saving seminars provided by PBSP that taught Talib the proper way to plan and care for her large family.

A lesson on loss

One of Talib's older children eventually married Baitulon Mubpon who was 19 at that time. Like Talib, it was her relatives' urging that forced Mubpon to marry early.

She was not ready for it, and her husband-to-be had no stable job. Because of this, their family has always been on survival mode with three kids and no dependable income. There were times when they had nothing to eat. At one point, she had to give her second child water with sugar just so she could survive.

"The most heartbreaking about raising a family when you are unprepared is that you may end up feeling that you've failed as a parent. It really is hard to raise a family when you are young," Mubpon disclosed.

At that time, she already started attending sessions on health education and family planning (FP) through the ARCHES project. And while still absorbing her newfound knowledge, the inevitable happened. Her youngest daughter, who was just a month-old, died due to her family's lack of resources. It was the worst situation a mother could ever experience, something that Mubpon is still recovering from until now.

It was only through the lessons they learned from the project that gave Mubpon the extra push in moving forward with her remaining family.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE

The ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao" was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam, and was implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

The PBSP-initiated project educated mothers from Maguindanao and other areas in the ARMM on sexual and reproductive health services and family planning so they would know how to properly plan and take care of their children and families. The PBSP intervention also provided delivery beds and delivery kits to their barangay so mothers would have better birthing experiences.

For Mubpon, the lessons she learned from the ARCHES project did not only help her go through the loss of her youngest son but also taught her how to plan ahead for the future, especially because she had other children to look after.

"I learned the importance of proper spacing so that you can still attend to your child before you go on and have another one. In this way, you can truly take care of their needs," she said.

On the other hand, her mother-in-law Talib was able to appreciate the importance of birth spacing and the use of family planning methods in ensuring the overall safety of both mother and child.

"If I knew it earlier, I will really follow family planning. Today, I'm determined to apply FP because I've realized that it is very difficult to have more than a dozen children without a stable income," Talib said.

CHANGING LIVES, CHANGING PATTERNS

Through the seminars, Talib and Mubpon were once again reminded on the importance of undergoing prenatal care. Their children also received free vaccines to improve their immune system and overall health.

Now, both women are sharing what they learned from their sessions with their neighbors so they can also enjoy the free services offered by the Barangay Health Unit through the help of the ARCHES project.

"My advice to the younger generation is not to marry until they have stable jobs. They should also limit their children to at least three to four so they would be properly taken care of," Talib said.

On the other hand, the project also encouraged Mubpon to become a better mother by inspiring her to look for other options to gain income.

"I don't want us to go back to that time where I couldn't even buy those clothes, not even milk, because we have nothing. I want to do better for my children because I want to provide them with their needs," Mubpon said.



BAITULON MUBPON uses the lessons she learned from the ARCHES Project to cope with the loss of her child and to plan ahead for her family's future.





CHANGING MINDSETS

Providing health services to communities is not easy. The lack of resources, geographical isolation, and misconceptions about health make it challenging for the ARCHES staff, nurses, midwives, municipal health officers, and even tribal leaders to do their jobs. But their dedication and passion for service continue to inspire them to brave these challenges so they can enlighten and help people make better decisions about their health, and ultimately, save lives.

In the following pages are inspiring stories of service providers of the ARCHES Project who went the extra mile to reach out to communities in need of sexual and reproductive health services.

FROM COAST TO COAST

A nurse finds fulfillment in bringing reproductive health services to women in Tawi-Tawi

For Nurse Jurfaida Abubakar, going from one community to another to fulfill her duties is not an easy and simple task.

In a province where municipalities are scattered in different islands, she would travel the seas of Tawi-Tawi for hours just to get from one coast to another to deliver health services to women of reproductive age.

A CHANGE OF DREAMS

Abubakar grew up with fond memories of her childhood. The eldest of five, she made sure to set a good example to her siblings.

As a child, she often found herself feeling inspired by her English teacher. She even thought that she would become one someday. However, when she got to high school, there was something about the doctor's uniform that encouraged her to pursue a degree in the field of medicine. But the expensive cost of a medicine course forced her to take up Nursing instead at the Unibersidad de Zamboanga.

After passing the licensure exam in 2012, Abubakar was hired by the Integrated Provincial Health Office in Tawi-Tawi. She worked there for over a year until she was transferred to the Rural Health Unit.

"I became part of the Registered Nurses for Health Enhancement and Local Service (RN HEALS). We delivered basic health services to different communities in Tawi-Tawi. I preferred being a community nurse than being in the hospital because I was able to experience reaching out to those in far-flung areas," she said.

DELIVERING SERVICES

In 2015, Abubakar became a nurse for the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao". The project was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam and implemented by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

As an ARCHES nurse, Abubakar encounters challenges in providing reproductive health services to the beneficiaries and in conducting family planning (FP) consultations.

"Since Tawi-Tawi is composed of many interisland municipalities, there are many barangays that are too far from the mainland. We have communities in Tawi-Tawi that have limited access to health services because the RHUs and other service providers rarely reach them. We travel to these islands just to deliver ARCHES services. The women there availed of FP services," Abubakar said.

Another challenge was the difficulty in establishing partnerships with local health units.

"There are local health units who do not want NGOs in their community. We had to explain to them that what we're only trying to do is to help them improve health services," she added.

Her team conducts awareness sessions to correct misconceptions and encourage communities to care for their reproductive health.

"There are many misconceptions about FP, especially in using contraceptives. That's why many of them are reluctant to avail of it. Our strategy was to talk to their local leaders and asked for their help in raising awareness among men, women, and even the youth in the community," said Abubakar.

A FULFILLING JOB

The ARCHES Project helped Abubakar strengthen her commitment to her work. It also boosted her confidence in dealing with people and deepened her care for others. The trainings and seminars also helped in her professional development.

"As a woman, it's not always easy to be involved in development work like the ARCHES Project, especially when you travel to far-flung communities. You have to learn to adjust to the environment. Sometimes, you have to jump from the boat to the dock, endure the heat and the rain. I've been to communities where there's no water and we stayed there for a couple of days, so there's really no room to be picky," she shared.

Amid all the challenges, the 27-year-old pioneer staff of the ARCHES project has found fulfillment and happiness in her job. "Seeing how the ARCHES Project was able to correct the misconceptions of the locals and encouraged them to care for their reproductive health and use family planning is fulfilling for me. Knowing that I was able to contribute to that in my own little way makes this work all the more worthwhile," Abubakar said.



NURSE JURFAIDA Abubakar travels the seas for hours just to deliver health services to women in Tawi-Tawi.



As the eldest of nine siblings, Wanfatma Marrack was already doing family responsibilities when she was six years old.

Her mother would give birth yearly so she would help with the household chores. She rarely went out to play with other kids and spent most of her childhood looking after her siblings. There were times when she would wake up in the middle of the night to prepare milk for the baby.

Marrack wanted to be a doctor but financial difficulties prevented her from pursuing her dream. Her father's income as a teacher was not enough to finance her studies and meet the needs of her siblings.

Nevertheless, she took up a degree in BS Biology at the Mindanao State University-Sulu, thinking it could be a stepping stone to a medical degree if she could later afford it.

However, her path took a different turn when she got married and started a family.

WANFATMA MARRACK,
a community organizer,
encourages communities to
care for their reproductive
health.

THE MESSENGER

A community organizer brings together people to advocate for access to sexual and reproductive health services

STRUGGLES WITH MOTHERHOOD

Marrack was 22 when she got married and had her first baby. The prospect of starting a family excited her. There was a sense of fulfillment when she held her baby for the first time. But as the days went by, she realized that motherhood is not easy.

"I was happy at first, but I also realized that it was hard to raise a family when you're not financially stable. My husband and I did not have a stable job at that time. But even in that situation, I still got pregnant every year until we had four kids," she shared.

Marrack also took her health for granted during her pregnancies. She rarely went for check-ups because of the distance of the health center and clinics from her house.

"I knew there were health services for women but availing them was not a priority. I thought it was best to focus on my work and my family," she added.

GAINING A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Marrack worked for three NGOs before she became a community organizer for the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao" in 2016. The project was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam and implemented

by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

Marrack facilitates coordination with the local government units, stakeholders, partners and health workers who help implement the project. Their team would go to far-flung communities to conduct awareness sessions on reproductive health services and family planning (FP) and help the Rural Health Units (RHUs) in providing these services.

"Most of the cases of maternal deaths happen in remote areas where early marriages and early pregnancies are prevalent. They did not avail the health services because the RHUs were not able to reach their community," said Marrack, the lead community organizer of ARCHES in Sulu. "Thankfully through the project, the people gained access to the sessions and FP methods."

According to Marrack, many still had misconceptions about these services, one being haram or forbidden to Muslims.

"Most Muslims believe that FP violates the tradition and culture of their religion. They think that it forbids them from having children. What we did was we established partnerships with Muslim religious leaders to help

us conduct community awareness sessions for couples about these false beliefs," Marrack said.

HEALTHIER MOTHERS

Since the ARCHES Project was implemented, Marrack said there has been an improvement in the reproductive health of mothers in Sulu. Apart from realizing the importance of reproductive health services and FP, an increase in the contraceptive prevalence rate or number of women who use contraceptives was also reported in the year-end reviews of the project with the Integrated Provincial Health Office.

Now a mother of six, Marrack is grateful to have also benefitted from the project.

"I am one of the mothers who learned the importance of family planning and reproductive health. I realized that my body was no longer fit to have more kids. I wish there was an ARCHES Project when I was just starting a family so I could have availed of the services. But I am happy that I was given the chance to work for this project. It is fulfilling to know that I was able to contribute to the improvement of reproductive health services in Sulu by helping mothers like myself," Marrack said.

SHARED MISSION

A nurse and acting municipal health officer promotes reproductive health services to patients and fellow healthcare providers in Basilan

Encouraging people to avail of reproductive health services in Basilan is a constant challenge for Muayda Sakkalahul. Despite the accessibility and availability of these services at the Rural Health Units (RHU), few were willing to avail it.

Apart from being against their cultural beliefs, they had misconceptions about it and they didn't find it a necessity.

To change this mindset, Sakkalahul, a registered nurse, committed to advocate for women empowerment and gender development by looking after their reproductive health.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE

As the eldest of five children, Sakkalahul learned to be responsible and independent at a young age. She helped her mother with the household chores and in caring for her siblings.

"As a child, I was burdened with the responsibilities that my parents gave me. But as I grew up, I began to appreciate this training because it helped me become a better person," she revealed.

Sakkalahul was in fourth grade when one of her teachers encouraged her to take up Nursing. Since then, she

studied hard to follow this career path. Eventually, she took up the course at the Western Mindanao State University in Zamboanga City.

In 1997, she was finally hired as a public nurse in their municipality in Sumisip, Basilan. But the limited staff in the RHU proved to be a challenge for Sakkalahul.

"I handled a barangay on my own because most of our staff had many responsibilities already. Most of the time, no one was there to supervise or teach me what to do. I relied mostly on what I learned in college," she recalled. Her work in the communities opened her eyes to the needs of the people and she became more passionate with her work. She learned that reproductive health was not given much importance in Basilan. The RHUs were not able to focus on it because of the limited staff and the other health projects they had to implement.

All these changed when the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao" came to Basilan in 2017. The project was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam and was implemented by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

GAINING ATTENTION

Thanks to the project, reproductive health is finally being prioritized in Basilan after decades of being dismissed and ignored.


"The ARCHES Project provided community awareness sessions and health education to the communities and the RHUs. The project helped us realize the importance of reproductive health," said Sakkalahul, a mother of four.

The RHU in Basilan also received medical equipment which helped healthcare providers improve their services. The project likewise increased the contraceptive prevalence rate or the number of women using contraceptives. People became aware about the importance of family planning and reproductive health.

"Through the ARCHES Project, we were able to reach the Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). Before, we had a problem reaching out to the beneficiaries. Now, they are the ones who approach us just to avail of reproductive health services," Sakkalahul said.

SHARING THE ADVOCACY

As Sakkalahul became a better nurse, her compassion for service also deepened. In fact, she even

A portrait of Muayda Sakkalahul, a woman wearing a beige hijab and a patterned white scarf with gold and red accents. She is wearing a beige blazer and has a slight smile. The background is a soft, light yellow.

went the extra mile to develop the Gender Development Plan of their municipality.

“One of the focus of the Gender Development Plan is the Reproductive Health and Family Planning (RHFP) program. We want to ensure that we can sustain RHFP services to our constituents. We are currently working on the policies to strengthen the program,” said the 45-year-old acting Municipal Health Officer.

When not managing the day-to-day activities of their health office, Sakkalahul devotes her time to encouraging and inspiring fellow nurses and health workers to provide communities with quality health services and culture-sensitive policies and programs.

“We need to empower our healthcare workers with the proper knowledge and skills and collaborate with other organizations so we can come up with better projects. In the end, we all have the same goal and that is to build a better community,” said Sakkalahul.

MUAYDA SAKKALAHUL works to strengthen reproductive health and family planning services in Basilan.



SITTIE MACALUNAS conducts awareness sessions to educate communities on birth spacing as well as maternal and child health.

A WILLING CONVERT

A community organizer in Maguindanao learns the importance of family planning and reproductive health

A mother of five, Sittie Suad Esmael-Macalunas knew there were reproductive health and Family Planning (FP) services in their Rural Health Unit (RHU) but it was an unspoken topic in their community.

Believing it to be forbidden in their religion, she disregarded the services even when she was pregnant. It never occurred to her that she would later work for a project that advocates for reproductive health and FP.

AN UNEASY CHILDHOOD

The seventh of eight siblings, Macalunas grew up moving from one place to another due to her father's job. Her father was a commander and community organizer in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

She and her siblings transferred schools every time they moved. One time, she had difficulty focusing on her studies when they transferred in the middle of the school year. When the 1996 Peace Agreement was finalized, her father lived a new life as an Arabic teacher and their family finally settled in Maguindanao.

GOING INTO SOCIAL WORK

Wanting to help others, Macalunas completed her degree in Social Work in Cotabato City State Polytechnic College. After graduation, she got married and had kids. In need of a job to support her growing family, she worked as an enumerator and community organizer for different NGOs.

Her work brought her to different communities and projects, giving Macalunas an opportunity to fulfill her dream of helping others. In 2015, she became part of the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao." The project was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam and implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

"We never really talked about reproductive health and FP in our community. We knew it was available in the clinics but there was no one to explain or encourage us to avail the services. The ARCHES Project helped me understand its importance to women," she said.

The ARCHES team conducts community awareness sessions to educate people about reproductive health and FP. They partner with community and religious leaders to encourage their beneficiaries to avail of the services. They also assist the RHUs in providing these services.

"Now that I know that it does not violate our Muslim religion, I help explain to them that FP does not prevent them from having children but only promotes to use birth spacing instead," she added.

Aside from the increasing number of couples using FP, the ARCHES Project also helped the RHUs increase facility-based deliveries in their place.

"Most women used to think that it is better to give birth at home because they feel more comfortable with their family looking after them. We helped them understand that it is safer to give birth in hospitals or clinics," Macalunas shared.

CONTINUING THE MISSION

Knowing that she was able to help educate women is enough motivation for her to work harder. She also uses this opportunity to orient women about their rights and policies on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC).

"It is important for women to understand that they are not required to keep giving birth. It is their right to use FP and birth spacing to maintain their health," she pointed out.

With more enlightened couples now using these methods and services, she is starting to see the fruits of her labor.

"I am one of those women who were able to understand the importance of FP through the ARCHES Project. I am happy to know that the beneficiaries that we were able to reach continuously use FP until now. I hope that we will be able to encourage more women to prioritize their health for their sake and for their families," said Macalunas.

SERVING IN A BETTER ROLE

A former traditional birth attendant and folk healer finds fulfillment in serving mothers as a barangay health worker

A pregnant mother was already screaming for help when Emma Tiboron Domato, a traditional birth attendant, arrived in her house.

The baby's head was already out, but the relatives of the patient could not pull the baby's arms. It was Domato who continued to assist during the delivery.

"It is difficult to give birth at home because there are no proper tools like surgical scissors, gloves, disinfectants and washing area. This puts the mother and baby vulnerable to infection because it is unsterilized. But I could understand their situation. They have no money to pay for hospital. The road is also far and difficult to travel which makes transportation more expensive," revealed Domato, a 39-year-old former folk healer in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur.

In 2012, she became a Barangay Health Worker (BHW) at the Rural Health Unit (RHU) of Piagapo after their barangay chairman saw her potential while helping monitor pregnant mothers in the community.

"I stopped as a folk healer when I became a BHW. I became busy at the health center, assisting pregnant women during pre-natal check-ups. If someone needs my assistance, I immediately refer them to the health center. I encourage them

to patronize the health center because it is safer and free. There are doctors and nurses in case of complications. They can also avail medicines and vitamins. As their former healer, I would even accompany them to the health center because they feel more comfortable being with me," Domato said.

CHALLENGES IN FAMILY PLANNING

But being a BHW also gave her a difficult challenge — that is convincing skeptical mothers about family planning, including using contraceptives. It was through the ARCHES Project or "Improving the Availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao" where she acquired knowledge about family planning (FP) and skills on counseling mothers to guide them to make an informed choice. The project was funded by European Union (EU) through Oxfam, and was implemented by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations.

Domato was one of 10 BHWs who were invited to an ARCHES Project seminar on the relevance of family planning, especially to mothers who give birth every year.

"We learned that birth spacing is important. We need to spend quality time with our children and family. I availed birth control implant since I have many children, too. It is good for three years before it will be replaced, if I decide to take it again," she said.

With the new FP methods she learned from the ARCHES Project, Domato began conducting counseling sessions on family planning for her fellow mothers in the community.

"I go down to the community. Sometimes I do house visits. They always welcome me and consult me about family planning. I explain to them the different contraceptives and FP methods that are available. When they feel that one option is a certain fit to their needs, they would request me to accompany them to the health center to avail of it," she shared.

A TRUSTED LEADER

Domato is an asset in their rural health unit because people in the community already trust her. In fact, the women became more conscious of their health needs because of her sessions with them. Their health center, on the other hand, became an active facility in advocating family planning.

"I felt happy because they trust me. I was able to help more mothers. They are also happy to talk to me because they can get information about projects in the health center. For example, there is a bucket of non-food and food items for every pregnant mother who completes at least four sessions of pre-natal check-ups. It is a way of encouraging them to patronize the health center. I already have a lot of pregnant mothers who availed the assistance. They wanted me to put them

in my record so they can get another assistance, in case there are new projects," she said.

Her work as a BHW brought more fulfillment, especially with the knowledge and skills she learned from the ARCHES Project.

Domato said, "I gained more credentials when I learned about family planning. Now, I know how to conduct counseling sessions to fellow mothers. They listen to me and I also listen to them. If they have a problem, I try to solve it. If they need medical attention, I immediately accompany them to the health center even if I am busy with work."

EMMA DOMATO goes the extra mile in helping fellow mothers in her community to care for themselves and their children.

TARGET SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN
Enrollment and Ration Card
6-59 months (MAM)

ALWAYS BRING THIS CARD DURING VISIT TO CLAIM YOUR RATION

Child's Name: Alvin G. Geron
Date of Birth: 11/25/11
Sex: Male
Address: Barangay 1, Piagapo, Marikina City

Month	Weight (kg)	Height (cm)	Weight (kg)	Height (cm)	Weight (kg)	Height (cm)
1	7.5	65.0	8.0	66.0	8.5	67.0
2	8.0	67.0	8.5	68.0	9.0	69.0
3	8.5	69.0	9.0	70.0	9.5	71.0
4	9.0	71.0	9.5	72.0	10.0	73.0
5	9.5	73.0	10.0	74.0	10.5	75.0
6	10.0	75.0	10.5	76.0	11.0	77.0
7	10.5	77.0	11.0	78.0	11.5	79.0
8	11.0	80.0	11.5	81.0	12.0	82.0
9	11.5	83.0	12.0	84.0	12.5	85.0
10	12.0	86.0	12.5	87.0	13.0	88.0
11	12.5	90.0	13.0	91.0	13.5	92.0
12	13.0	93.0	13.5	94.0	14.0	95.0

Signature: [Signature]
Date: 11/25/11

Logo: PIAGAPO RURAL HEALTH UNIT, PIAGAPO, MARIKINA CITY



There is literally ain't no mountain high enough for midwife Arlyn Jeanette B. Romano who has dedicated her life to providing quality healthcare service to her communities in Maguindanao, wherever it is and whatever it takes.

Romano who is also a registered nurse, have gone through so many difficulties just to be able to carry out her duties. When she started her work at age 24, she was assigned to marginalized communities that belonged to the Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) in their province. Sometimes, her team would request a helicopter just to be able to reach every barangay for immunization and treatment during disease outbreaks.

"Our situation was very difficult at that time. We had no doctors or nurses to help us. We, midwives had to be well equipped, since nobody could guide us on what to do. One area was so remote that the only way to go there is to walk in a sitting position while hugging your knees to your chin. Sometimes, we also use helicopters or pump boats just to reach the area," she recalled.

Twenty-eight years later, Romano still has that burning passion to continue serving their Rural Health Unit which caters to 16,570 people in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

ARLYN ROMANO uses various strategies to entice mothers to avail of reproductive health services in their rural health unit in Maguindanao.

DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES

A nurse and midwife for 28 years faces every obstacle head on just to provide quality healthcare service to communities

CALLED TO SERVE

Romano and her three other siblings were all sent to school by their parents who works as a farmer and a teacher. She finished Bachelor of Science in Psychology and pursued her dream to become a midwife. Later on, she studied Nursing to be of further help to her community.

"Since my mother and siblings were teachers, I was discouraged to become one. I decided to pursue midwifery because I wanted to take care of babies and to help the community through vaccination and other tasks. And since I do believe that learning is a continuous process, I studied nursing and attended classes every weekend while working during weekdays," she shared.

In 1991, Romano was deployed as a midwife to four barangays in her hometown in North Upi, Maguindanao. She is part of the first batch of midwives assigned in barangay health stations to render quality healthcare service to people in depressed, marginalized, and underserved areas.

After working in her hometown, she was transferred in the coastal area of Datu Blah T. Sinsuat, Maguindanao where she served the municipality from 1995 to 2013. Her experiences equipped her with knowledge and skills that she was able to apply during difficult situations.

USING CREATIVE WAYS

At the RHU where she currently works, Romano tries to address problems of early pregnancy, maternal and child mortality, and the low number of women seeking pre-natal care and family planning methods. With the limited number of RHU staff, they also have difficulty attending to the large population in their area.

After undergoing an implant training under the ARCHES Project, Romano was able to think of creative ways to help more women avail of the services they offer. She conducts mother classes which focus on pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding. She also holds regular "Buntis Day" activities to teach women on pregnancy tracking and family planning (FP) as well as a Buntis Congress where pregnant mothers are educated on FP. Romano also conducts a "Maginoo Session," to help fathers in the community understand the benefits of FP. She also initiated ID cards to easily locate the records of every patient in the community.

The ARCHES Project or "Improving the availability of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao" was funded by the European Union (EU) through Oxfam, and implemented by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) with other organizations. The project aims to improve the communities' knowledge on FP, prevent maternal deaths,

and increase their contraceptive prevalence rates (CPR). CPR refers to the percentage of women who are currently using, or whose sexual partner is currently using at least one method of contraception.

"With the help of ARCHES, we can easily attend to the needs of our patients, especially during pre-natal check-ups because of the equipment and trainings they've provided," she said.

OF CHANGES AND FULFILLMENT

Because of Romano's strong commitment to her work, which even forced her to be away from her family at times, she was awarded as an Outstanding Midwife in Datu Odin Sinsuat and as one of the Unsung Heroes of Yolanda in 2010, for her work in a medical mission in the aftermath of the typhoon.

With the ARCHES partnership, she realized that she has a bigger responsibility to educate the community on FP, early pregnancy, and reproductive health.

"I am doing everything to improve my work because I want to help the community and leave a legacy. I could not help them by giving money but at least I can give my time and effort to help my patients. I'm happy with what I'm doing and I'll continue to do this as long as I can and whatever it takes," Romano said.

FREEDOM FROM IGNORANCE

A Muslim religious leader enlightens communities
on misconceptions on reproductive health and child birth

Living in the conflict-torn municipality of Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao, Ustadza Anisa Taha-Arab had to go through a difficult time when she was growing up.

She and her 15 other siblings had to evacuate four times and transferred from one place to another, when their house got burned during Martial Law. Her most challenging experience though was when she was forced by her father to get married at 20. This Muslim custom was also observed by her elder sisters who had no choice but to follow their father's wishes.

"My father was a person of principle. He had his own rules to be followed by our family, but I told him that I will not marry at an early age. I wanted to continue my studies even in Madrasa (a religious Islamic school). So, he gave me options to consider. If I will not follow him, I should leave the house and forget that he was my father," she shared.

Since education is important to Arab, she decided to leave her family and pursue her dreams.

According to Arab, education is not considered important in some Muslim households like hers, especially when you're a female child.

"In our household, if you're a woman, you don't need to go further to higher education. As long as you can read basic alphabet characters, you won't get lost," she revealed.

ON HER OWN

To survive, Arab worked as a corn and rice harvester to sustain her daily needs. While working, she made sure that she gave her best in school. The struggles and perseverance paid off when Arab topped her class in Brgy. Tariken, Sultan Kudarat.

Seeing her success, Arab's father was enlightened and eventually allowed her to return to their house while continuing her studies. He also promised to dispense with the marriage.

Later, she was given an opportunity to study both Arabic and formal class in high school at Kutawato Darussalam College, Inc. (formerly Ma'had Kutawato Al-Islamie). After that, she took up Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies at the same school.

"I wanted to finish my studies because I've seen my neighbors and cousins who were successful at that time. Every morning, they went to their offices and their lives were different compared to us," she recalled.

EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGE

After graduation, Arab saw the opportunity to give back by conducting Arabic classes for children and educating women in the barangay about their rights.

With a desire to also change the misconceptions on sexual and reproductive health services as well as family planning (FP), she organized


barangay meetings to help female members in their community to know the proper care during pregnancy and childbirth.

"I am teaching Arabic every morning and serving the community in the afternoon. I am educating every mother in the barangay about reproductive health services and women's rights. Before, they only knew about their responsibility and not their rights. I also wanted to change Maguindanoan practices on giving birth. My family believed that when you give birth, you should do it quietly because you conceived it silently. *Bawal umere* (You're not allowed to push)," she said.

Gradually, Arab was able to change the perception of the community and encourage them to avail of these services and FP methods through several trainings.

One of her accomplishments was the translation of FP and maternal and child care modules into Maguindanaon. She also established the Noorus Salam, a national network of religious women leaders, and advocates of peace, maternal and child health in the Bangsamoro region.

But in spite all these efforts, there are those who remain cynical. In fact, Arab was banned one time after discussing FP in a Muslim community. However, this setback did not deter her from finding other ways to spread her advocacy.



She still continued to serve the community through her radio programs in health, nutrition, and women's rights. She was one of the members of the technical working group on the Model Family in Islam, a fatwa (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority) clarifying the issues of early and forced marriage, pre-marriage counselling, and gender and health education in the context of Islam.

To change her family tradition on education, and early marriage, Arab tries to be a role model in their community.

"Right after my three nieces graduated in elementary, I let them study in a formal and Arabic class to avoid early marriage. It's not just the men who should finish their education, but the women as well," she stressed.

CONTINUING HER MISSION

At present, Arab is still very active in promoting family planning, women's rights, and health education in her community. She also helps orphans in the region through the Insani Yardim Vakfi (IHH) – Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), a Turkey-based humanitarian foundation where she works as its Orphanage Director.

"I'm very happy because I was able to help the community, influence other people, and change our family's culture and tradition through the ARCHES project. And as time went by, I gained knowledge on health, nutrition, and women's rights. I'm more mature and brave enough to face any problem in life now. Nothing could compare to the feeling of helping other people and seeing their lives change," Arab said.

A MUSLIM religious leader, Ustadza Taha-Arab serves as the voice of women in her community.

A vibrant, sunlit field of banana plants. The large, broad leaves are a mix of bright green and yellow-green, indicating healthy growth. The background is filled with more dense foliage, creating a sense of a thriving agricultural environment. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows and highlighting the textures of the leaves.

WOMEN IN HEELS

In this section, we present the life-changing stories of women we have helped and empowered through our programs in health, education, environment, and livelihood.



At 16, Snooky (not her real name) ran away from her home in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur to avoid an arranged marriage. She and her mother went to Cagayan de Oro City and sought refuge in a relative's house.

"After 10 days, my father fetched us and agreed not to force me to marry anymore. I still wanted to finish school so I could work and help my family. I availed a scholarship and graduated Midwifery at Mapandi Memorial College in Marawi City," recalled Snooky.

In 1990, she went to Dammam in Saudi Arabia to work as a nurse. He met a guy there who was a relative of her sibling's wife from Marawi City. He courted her and later, they became a couple.

When Snooky took a vacation leave in 1998, the guy followed her in the Philippines to propose for marriage.

"My family did not want me to marry him because there were rumors that he already had a wife and children. But he denied. He even showed me documents certifying that he was single. I believed him and fought for our love. We were married in March 1998 in Iligan, because my family was against him. My father did not even attend our wedding," revealed Snooky.

DISCOVERING HER CHEATING HUSBAND

After her two-month vacation leave, Snooky went back to work in Saudi Arabia. Her husband also went back abroad but was delayed for five days.

Her family's suspicions proved true when she discovered that her husband indeed has a wife and three children.

¹ Article 45 of P.D. 1083 also known as the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines" defines "divorce" as the formal dissolution of the marriage bond in accordance with this Code to be granted only after the exhaustion of all possible means of reconciliation between the spouses.

A BENEFICIARY of the Creating Spaces Project, Snooky finds the strength to separate from her cheating husband.

WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

After learning her rights through the Creating Spaces project, a wife from Maranao chooses to make a difficult but liberating decision

"I made a phone call to his office and his Arabian boss told me he went to Hong Kong and stayed there for three days before going to Saudi Arabia. That was the time I started to investigate and learned that he already has a wife before our marriage and has three children," lamented Snooky.

After a series of fights between her and her husband, the latter finally sent divorce papers to the first wife. In Maranao, the husband's signature is enough to make divorce. But a guy cannot wed another girl without the consent of the first wife.

Snooky thought everything would be bliss after that and went on to build a family with her husband. She became pregnant twice in 1999 and in 2000, and everytime, she would go home to give birth in the Philippines.

"My husband stayed in Hong Kong before going home to the Philippines. When he arrived, I was wondering why he would always go to Marawi City. One day, I decided to follow him and saw him bringing food for someone. When I confronted him, he said it was for his mother. I didn't believe him because I knew that his mother would not like that kind of food. Later, he admitted that it was for his mistress," she recalled.

Snooky, who was then very pregnant, fought with her husband's mistress and was hospitalized after the

encounter. Her family almost declared rido (clan feud) because the other family knew about her husband's mistress.

"In 2003, I gave birth to our third child. We stayed in Manila. But later on, I decided to return to Saudi because my husband's support was diminishing. While in Saudi Arabia, I still doubted my husband's loyalty so I investigated again. I found him in a hospital looking after his mistress who just gave birth," she said.

In 2014, Snooky returned to the Philippines, and was diagnosed of myoma. To add to her worries, she discovered that her husband has actually a dozen mistresses (four Muslims and eight Christians).

MAKING A STAND

Through referral, Snooky was invited to attend a seminar about Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children which was part of the Creating Spaces Project funded by the Global Affairs Canada through Oxfam, and implemented by PBSP in partnership with Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation, Incorporated (AMDFI).

"I was crying during the seminar. I realized that my husband violated my rights. The last violation he did was when I mortgaged my jewelry to buy wholesale dried fish in Pagadian City and then resold it in our store. I did not expect that he would just spend

the money for his two mistresses. So, I confronted them and they were all unaware of his womanizing and prior marriage. That was the time I finally forced him to sign a divorce paper in August 2017," said Snooky.

With the help of organizations and projects like Creating Spaces, she now feels much more comfortable, free from emotional pain, and empowered to make her own sound decisions for her family.

"I filed a complaint to Shariah Court obliging my ex-husband to provide child support. Thanks to the seminar. I now know my rights. The project also trained us how to make turmeric powder. I can use the skills to generate more income from selling processed foods. I also realized that I should have listened to my parents. They really know what's best for me," she revealed.

Snooky's husband tried to reconcile with her and wanted her back. But for her, it was already too late for that.

"He called me, saying he still loves me and that he regrets what he did to me. He wanted us to get back together. But I advised him to just look for a woman who could stay with him and tolerate his ways. I could no longer regain the trust that was lost when he cheated on me. I told him not to bother me anymore because my children and I are happy now that we are divorced," Snooky concluded.

SPEAKING UP

A Maranao youth leader advocates against child marriages and strives to get more young people to do the same

Sixteen-year-old Norhafisa Hadji Yusoph Pangcoga almost stopped school after the Marawi siege. Her mother's clothing business was lost as their merchandise were either destroyed or stolen during the five-month war between government troops and terrorists.

When their stocks from Indonesia came, she had to help her mother revive their shop and sell their merchandise in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur.

"Later, my mother realized that I needed to finish my education so I can graduate immediately. So she let me go back to school and focus on my studies. I felt guilty about studying instead of helping her," said Pangcoga, a Grade 11 student at Maito Basak National High School in Saguiaran.

In school, she joined a lot of extra-curricular activities, and was even elected Supreme Student Government (SSG) Officer. She handled projects like solid waste management and the No Smoking campaign. She also managed latecomers and those who had no uniforms in school. Later on though, she decided to quit her SSG responsibilities.

"I wanted to focus on my academics because I want to get good grades. I want to pursue college at the Mindanao State University (MSU) and become a Social Worker someday. I feel the need to help others. More people are becoming poorer every day," Pangcoga said.

EYE-OPENING YOUTH CAMP

Her passion for helping people was further developed when she attended a youth leadership camp at the MSU Main Campus. The activity was an initiative of the Creating Spaces Project funded by Global Affairs Canada through Oxfam, and was implemented by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), in partnership with Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation Incorporated (AMDFI).

"I learned so many things in the youth camp. They taught us concepts about the Bangsamoro as well as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). I have learned that the Shariah law also recognizes the right of Muslim girls to reject forced and early marriage," said Pangcoga.

She also learned that the dowry should be given to the bride, not to the bride's parents, and that the former should have a say in deciding how much of it will be spent for the wedding and for investment. The dowry should empower the newlyweds.

"I also learned that all of us can be a leader. We can be a good model for others. As a teenager, I choose to focus on my studies and help my mother recover our business. I did not want to marry at an early age," she declared.

ADVOCATING AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

Because of her desire to speak up about this issue, Pangcoga became a youth representative in Congress about House Bill No. 8440 or An Act Protecting Children By

Prohibiting And Declaring Child Marriage As Illegal And Providing Programs And Penalties.

"The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation Incorporated (PLCPD) chose me to become their youth representative in Congress. They taught me how to speak in public. We went to Manila twice to advocate against child marriage. This is a pressing issue. Both Muslims and indigenous peoples are vulnerable to this," she said.

Pangcoga is lucky she did not experience being forced into this. Her mother, who went through child marriage and two divorces¹, does not want her to experience the same mistake.

"If ever someone will approach my mother to marry me, I will not accept it even if the guy is my crush. That is only puppy love. My crush cannot support my needs. I am still young. I am thinking about my future. I still need to finish school so I can work and help my family," she added.

AN EMPOWERED TEEN

Pangcoga believes her lessons from the youth camp and her role as youth leader helped mold her into the young empowered teen that she is now.

¹ Article 45 of P.D. 1083 also known as the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines" defines "divorce" as the formal dissolution of the marriage bond in accordance with this Code to be granted only after the exhaustion of all possible means of reconciliation between the spouses.

"I became more empowered. I can now voice out the things I want to explain. I know my rights now, especially in saying no to forced and early marriage. I can now manage to face big challenges like the effects of the Marawi Siege. My mother and I are now able to manage our time and resources. My mother handles our store on weekdays while I manage it on weekends so she can rest," she said.

The Creating Spaces Project is looking for more youth leaders like her to take on the cause but it cannot reach all the youth in her community. She hopes to help them by teaching and involving her peers.

"I am thankful to the project because it taught me a lot. It changed the way I look at things. I hope that the project through my help can reach more youth in the community. The culture of forced and early marriage is prevalent among Maranaos. We need to conduct awareness sessions about it," said Pangcoga who is determined to get more young people to speak up and defend their rights.

AS A YOUTH LEADER,
Norhafisa Pangcoga
advocates against child
marriages in Congress to
gain more support for her
cause.



ANALIZA BACHOCO finds fulfillment in educating her daycare center preschoolers and in partnering with their parents.

Teaching is a noble profession, it helps shape the mind, character and the future of an individual. But It requires adequate preparation and training and a deep sense of responsibility.

For Teacher Analiza Bachoco of Daycare Center 6, Cluster 3 of the Manila Daycare Center in Baseco, Manila, teaching is all these and more.

“It brings me joy that I am able to teach and help children. In the process, I am helping the community. The respect they give back is enriching and uplifts my dignity as a person,” she shared.

RESPONDING TO HER CALLING

Bachoco grew up in Sta. Mesa and moved to her father’s house in Baseco to study. As a scholar of San Agustin Church, she studied Computer Management by day and taught Catechism and worked as a church usherette in her free time. Business-related jobs were her preference but it was teaching that came first.

After two years of teaching in the World Mission Church, she moved to the Manila Department of Social Welfare (MDSW) and handled the Manila Daycare Center 6.

“The classes were until noon time and I need to take care of my kids at home so I thought that the PHP3,500 salary a month was just okay. After two years, I realized that teaching is what God wants me to do. It became a challenge for me though so I strived to learn and

MORE THAN A NOBLE PROFESSION

This daycare center teacher strives to make a difference not only in the lives of her students but also in their community

improve my teaching skills. I learned to be a social worker too, since we were also trained through MDSW's Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), a program for the child's health and emotional development," said Bachoco.

BUILDING A SECOND HOME FOR HER STUDENTS

Enrollment and the attendance of the kids in the daycare had long been a problem for Bachoco. The parents stopped sending their kids to school because they either didn't have money or food to feed their children before going to school.

During her first few years, she worked with the parents for the improvement of the daycare. She would use her own money to buy materials needed for the repair. The fathers built the bamboo fence while the mothers helped in cleaning and putting up the decorations. This continued until Philippine Business for Social Progress and the Hershey Company came to Baseco to provide more interventions to encourage kids to go to school.

Bachoco gave birth to her son, Hanz, in 2015, which was the same year that Hershey's came to Baseco for their "Nourishing Minds" program. This supplemental feeding program which addresses malnutrition in schools, is in partnership with PBSP and the MDSW.

"My son has Down Syndrome. I had to take him to the daycare with me every day. The parent-volunteers (feeding

helpers) take care of him while I hold classes. They loved my son so much and thought that he was the blessing that gave us Hershey's feeding program," said Bachoco.

Hershey's Nourishing Minds has been providing nutritious food to around 180 children in Baseco each school year.

"The feeding program is a very big help to the parents. They don't have to worry anymore about food expenses because their kids are fed here. We follow a standard nutrition and feeding cycle from the MDSW. We serve nutritious food and the kids are learning to eat veggies. Parent-volunteers who help in the preparation of the food get to watch over their children and assist their classmates as well," shared Bachoco.

The Hershey Company also funded the improvement of the daycare classrooms and surroundings. The roof, ceiling, and the comfort rooms were renovated. Roads and the hallway were cemented. A kitchen and several shelves were constructed inside the classrooms. The company also donated a computer, LED TV, ceiling fans and a freezer.

"Now, our daycare center is one of the best in terms of facilities. More and more parents bring their kids here every day to encourage them to enroll. Hershey's and PBSP are big blessings to us. They don't only feed our kids, they are solving the bigger problem of the community which is the lack

of education of our youth," Bachoco added.

FINDING HER PURPOSE

In 2016, Hanz died and Bachoco's world was shattered.

"It was vacation time when my son died. I lost interest in everything. I did not want to eat, I did not go out of my room for a week. I refused to go to church. I asked God, 'Why?' But realizing that this perhaps is part of God's plan, I submitted to Him. Come next school year, I devoted all my time to my students and talked to their parents after class. I stayed up late in the daycare and used every opportunity to get over my grief and somehow ease my pain," she shared.

Now in her 10th year in Cluster 3, with Hershey's and PBSP's continued support to their daycare center, Bachoco has found a deeper purpose and meaning as an educator to her preschoolers and their parents.

"I am very honored to play a big role in my community. As a teacher, especially in a public school, you have to have the heart to connect to the kids and their parents. Our daycare provides a second home to our kids, while we, the second parents, lay the foundation for the kids' development. We thank Hershey's and PBSP for their support. The parents have not seen such kind of unceasing help and generosity. We hope to pay them back and pray that God will always guide them," Bachoco said.

REAP WHAT YOU 'SEW'

A teacher on Olango island helps improve the lives of her students through dressmaking

When you are a resident of Olango island, you have to find better options other than fishing if you want a comfortable life.

Such is the case of 40-year-old Juana Soon, who developed her business acumen when she was young and used it to send herself to school and become a teacher. Now, she is even using her skill in dressmaking to improve the lives of her students.

"My mother was a dressmaker and had so many customers. So, she had to teach me dressmaking so that we could accommodate everyone. That's where I got the idea to make and sell string bags, uniforms, and dresses. I used the earnings to pay for my tuition so I could graduate from high school," she shared.

She eventually became a Technology and Livelihood Education teacher at the Sta. Rosa National High School (SRNHS). When it opened its senior high school (SHS) curriculum in 2017, she applied as a dressmaking teacher so students could learn from her experience.

SEWING THROUGH THE ODDS

But this job was tougher than she imagined it to be. Olango island, located five kilometers from Lapu-lapu City, still lacks facilities and equipment for SHS. The school had no sewing equipment and areas for her students' work immersions. She had to be creative and resourceful in teaching so they can learn as much as they can.

"They had to be capable interns and potential employees especially that the city has many business locators in need of people with dressmaking skills. So even if it was hard, I just

took the challenge as an exciting adventure because I am responsible for these kids," Soon shared.

She would make large illustrations of sewing machines and conduct sewing demonstrations to give her students something to learn from. Since dressmaking requires practical skills, she would partner with local government units to allow her students to use their workshop area for their classes every week.

Using her own money, Soon would even make other arrangements for fabrics, transportation, and other expenses just so she could give the students a better learning experience.

DREAM COME TRUE

It was, therefore, a dream come true when their school was given sewing machines by PBSP's open-water swimming race called the Olango Challenge. Aside from the new machines, her students also became the first batch of recipients of a one-year scholarship assistance as part the project.

They were also provided assessment fees for their national and technical vocational certifications. For Soon, this was the best gift for the students, especially that not all of them could afford the fees.

"The machines will really help them level up their practical skills while their monthly allowances will further inspire them to finish school. But getting the certificate is, for me, the last step they have to take to earn that ticket to success. And the more inspired I see my students now, the more inspired I become in teaching them more," she enthused.

EDUCATING FOR A BETTER LIFE

While she appreciates the support her students have been getting now, Soon does not want them to feel spoiled. So, with a fully functional sewing laboratory in her hands, she found creative ways to help them become more capable and responsible adults.

She would capitalize on all opportunities where her students could learn and earn. Their immersion uniforms, prom gowns, togas and bags became her students' "little" projects. They would sew them and sell to fellow schoolmates or their parents.

Eventually, other schools in need of uniforms, bags, and dresses commissioned her class to be their official dressmakers. Her unorthodox method allowed her students to save and earn at the same time. Such was the shared success of Soon and her students that she was given more tasks to do. She now handles 80 Grade 11 students, apart from the 26 graduating students. While overwhelmed with responsibility, she feels pride that the school is entrusting their future to her.

"Education is really important to my students, and I was chosen to be their teacher because I know how important dressmaking is. I finished my studies from making clothes. If I can share this passion and skill to my students completely, I know I can give them another option to have a better life," Soon added.



JUANA SOON teaches dressmaking to her students to give them a chance to earn even while they are still studying.



PACITA COLINA encourages the youth to go to school and finish their education so they can rise above poverty.

Education is a right and not a privilege. But most often, not everyone is given the chance to exercise this right. In many poor communities, access to education is a struggle and sometimes taken for granted because of certain cultures and traditions. There are even instances when people of certain groups or cultures experience discrimination and demeaning treatment for not being educated.

Pacita Colina, a tribal leader and a barangay official in Tomicor, Ampatuan in Maguindanao was once a victim of discrimination because of the notion that her tribe, the Teduray, are illiterate, uneducated, and less competent.

FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

Colina graduated from high school but was not able to finish college due to financial difficulties. She tried to work to support her schooling but the family needed her help to sustain the family's finances.

Years later, she found herself being discriminated in a training she attended. Her high school diploma and the eager will to learn were her only defense in dealing with discrimination.

"I once attended a training of the Philippine National Red Cross where I was a volunteer before. Some groups questioned my capabilities and asked, "What can an IP (indigenous people)

LEADING THE TEDURAY TRIBE

A tribal leader in Maguindanao sees education as the key that can uplift the lives of her people

like me contribute to anything when I am not educated, and did not go to school?”. I even heard them say that the Teduray should never join any of such activities again because we know nothing. I did not mind them at all. At the back of my mind, I know I am educated. I can do what they can and I did not allow myself to be affected,” Colina shared.

During the presentations, she proved them wrong. It was only Colina who spoke in front of many people and organizations who attended the training.

Colina became the first barangay secretary of Tomicor in 1973 which was also the year Tomicor Elementary School, the first school in their community, was established. Her task is to propose resolutions and communicate the concerns and the needs of the barangay to the municipal level. In 1992, she won as barangay captain.

“I decided to run because I wanted to do more to help my community. I wanted to represent the Teduray and to let others know that we exist in Tomicor,” Colina said.

MOVING ON TO HIGHER POSITIONS

Throughout her career, she never lost an election. She was able to provide what her tribe needed and the community is able to receive all the assistance that the national and municipal governments send out to them.

“My projects still exist and the community is still using it. We had a solar dryer for our corn farmers, a multi-purpose hall for barangay functions, and two warehouses that are still operational. We also provided trainings on alternative livelihood and assisted women in starting businesses,” she shared.

Colina’s term ended when the local government hired her to be the Municipal Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) where she worked as a consultant and adviser to the local government on Teduray culture and traditions. There were people who asked her to run for barangay office but she opted not to.

“I decided to give way to the next generations to let them exercise the value of leadership. In that way, even when we, the elders, are gone, they would know how to lead our people,” she explained.

LEARNING THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

When the Australian Government and PBSP begun the construction of the additional school building in Tomicor Elementary School, Colina helped mobilize the community

The Teduray culture’s bayanihan (collective) spirit was relived. The men pushed the delivery truck as it passed by the rough roads and carried some of the materials for the construction. They also fetched water from the river with the help of women and children.

They did it in shifts and gathered an average of 20 big containers a day for use in the construction of the school building. They also assigned people to safeguard the materials and monitor activities around the school.

“As parents, we are happy for the additional school building. Teachers are more eager to teach and the parents always bring their younger children to the school to encourage them to study. The new building did not just provide a conducive learning environment for the kids but has paved the way for the development of the Teduray’s appreciation of the value of education,” she revealed.

Colina now works as a “Finta Ilan” or a dignified elder who mediates and settles disputes between IPs through amicable settlements based on customary traditions and laws. She hopes to encourage more IP groups to follow the path of the Teduray in Tomicor.

“Education is very important to the young Teduray. We encourage our youth to value this opportunity given to us. Poverty should never be an excuse or a hindrance. It does not matter if you’re rich or poor, IP or not, nobody can take that away from you. Nothing can hinder you if you are educated. No one can help the tribe but those who are learned,” Colina said.

EDUCATING THE TEDURAY

A member of an indigenous group goes back to her community to be a teacher to the tribe

During her elementary and high school years, “palo” (spanking) from her father was one reason that pushed Phoebe Tomas to finish her education. “Papa and Mama would always remind us to study and finish school so that we can have a better life in the future. So back then, I was really scared to skip school or cut classes because if Papa finds out, we will get spanked. I just attended class every day and studied hard,” she shared.

Tomas is a Teduray Kindergarten teacher and an alumna of Tomicor Elementary School in Ampatuan, Maguindanao. Coming from another school, she was Grade 3 when she transferred to Tomicor ES.

“Before, Tomicor ES was just an ordinary school on the mountains. There were no electricity yet, no lights and ceiling fans. We had to endure the heat. Whenever it rained, we get soaked because our roofs and ceilings were damaged already. Sometimes, we would hold classes under a Narra tree for weeks because the classrooms were not enough for all grade levels. We also had to walk two hours just to go to school and another two hours to go home. It was really tiring,” lamented Tomas.

A MORE CONDUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In 2016, the Australian Government in partnership with Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) and DepEd-

ARMM, funded the construction of a two-classroom school building for Tomicor. This project is part of the Education Pathways to Peace program of the Australian Government. It aims to support learning outcomes and improve participation of learners in the ARMM and contribute to building peace at the school and community level and also within the regional government.

Aside from her experience as a student in Tomicor, Tomas was able to hold classes in the old classrooms before the project came.

“When I started teaching here, it was really hard since it seemed like the same old classrooms that we used when I was still studying here. No electricity, no ceiling fans and no lights. There’s no use bringing a laptop for your visual aids because if the battery runs out, there was no way you could recharge it. But now, it has changed. Ceiling fans and lights were installed since there’s electricity already. We can use laptops now for film showing and visual aids. There’s a separate comfort room for boys and girls. And we can easily put decorations to catch the attention of our students. We now have a conducive learning environment,” she shared.

NO OTHER OPTION BUT TEACHING

Growing up, teaching was never an option for Tomas. But when she got a college scholarship from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples

(NCIP), the only course offered was BS Education. So, she went to Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU) to study and finish her degree.

Fortunately, she was later tasked to handle Kindergarten in Tomicor ES.

“I really do not understand why it was the only course offered. And I also do not know why I took it. But later on, I realized why I chose this career—that is to be an educator to my fellow Teduray,” said Tomas.

The Tedurays’ appreciation of the importance of education has changed over the years. While others still see no value in it, their tribe in Brgy. Tomicor believed that education will enable them to improve their lives and build a better future.

Tomas may have had just one option back in college but for her, it was the best decision a Teduray like her could ever make. So now that the chance to return to her tribe and give back came, she couldn’t be any happier.

“I could have chosen other schools but I chose Tomicor to be able to give back and teach the children in my community. Now, I fully understand why I am here. I am here to inspire my tribe and help them change their lives. I want to show them that IPs like us also deserve to be educated, to reach our dreams and to improve our way of living,” Tomas concluded.



PHOEBE TOMAS gives back to her tribe as a dedicated Kindergarten teacher.



ENVIRONMENT



MARIANITA LUCES urges people in her community to embrace the values of cleanliness and caring for the environment.

Marianita Luces grew up surrounded by plants and trees in her hometown in Capiz so when she came to live in Parola, Tondo, she was shocked.

Instead of greeneries, Luces saw garbage everywhere. There were animal and human feces on the road, she could even smell the stench long after she has gone away from it. This is not what she envisioned for her home.

HURDLING CHALLENGES

When she was young, Luces would walk almost an hour amid the heat and rain, passing by ricefields just to go to school every day. Even though it was tiring, she was determined to learn. She wanted to finish her studies and go to college.

However, pursuing a college degree was more difficult for Luces, the youngest of four siblings. A relative sent her to college in Bacolod City. But the financial support she received was not enough. So she worked as a sales lady by day and studied as a Commerce student by night. This routine went on until she was able to graduate.

Upon her older sister's suggestion, Luces moved to Manila to find work.

THE PRIZE OF CHANGE

A mother helps transform her community in Tondo into a cleaner and healthier place to live in

She thought there would be more opportunities for her in the city. However, she had difficulty securing a stable job.

She settled for a job as a contractual employee for several companies until she and her husband put up their own sari-sari store in Parola. Managing their store gave Luces the opportunity to get to know the people in their community.

She also became more observant of the activities within her community. She saw that garbage were strewn everywhere by her neighbors. She also noticed the lack of plants in their area.

CLEANLINESS IN EVERY DOORSTEP

In 2013, Luces was invited by their barangay captain in Parola to be part of the Eco Patrol Project of the ICTSI Foundation and the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). The project advocates solid waste management in Parola.

"When I told my husband and children I wanted to join, they were initially against it. They didn't want to see me picking up and cleaning the trash of others. They were also worried I might get in trouble with the other households in our community," she revealed.

But Luces saw this as an opportunity to turn Parola into a cleaner and healthier place for their home. She joined the project as monitoring officer and learned about solid waste management. She monitors the day-to-day activities of her fellow Eco Patrollers.

"Every day, we go around Parola to collect and segregate wastes. We also have a clean-up drive on Saturdays with the local government," she said.

Luces and her team also conduct awareness sessions for the households in Parola. They discuss waste segregation, recycling, backyard gardening, fire prevention, and health and hygiene to the locals in the community.

"We also encourage out-of-school youths, children in conflict with the law, and senior citizens to participate in the advocacy," she added.

A WORTHY CAUSE

But advocating for cleanliness and solid waste management is not an easy task for Luces and her team. Up to now, there are still a few people in the community who do not want to segregate their wastes. Nevertheless, they continue holding their advocacy activities to encourage more people to join.

Fortunately, their hardwork has paid off. Luces is now happy to see big improvements in their community. Before the Eco Patrol, their place was really dirty and the smell of garbage was everywhere. Now, the community is clean. They have assigned places for garbage disposal. Some of the households have even started to put up their own backyard gardens.

The Parola Volunteer Eco patrollers' influence, patience, and perseverance in their duties, along with ICTSI Foundation's continuous information and education communications campaign have led to a significant behavioral change in the community as far as managing and disposal of waste is concerned.

"I hope that more people will join our advocacy to make Parola a cleaner and healthier place. I am very lucky to be part of a project that was able to change our community for the better," said Luces.

HIJAB TROOPER

From taking care of children as a nanny, a female soldier now brings joy to child-survivors of the Marawi Siege

Sharon Flor Larona, 30, used to live a difficult life as a nanny in Manila. She also worked as a saleslady and a vendor. Being in this situation and living far away from her family made her feel depressed.

"There came a point in my life when I no longer want to stay old as a housemaid anymore. The only way I can think of to make myself more useful is to enter the police or military service. I am not scared of the risk because I have already experienced all the hardships in life," she said.

Larona took the military exam in December 2008. After two weeks, she got the results and passed. She became a candidate soldier and took more training in 2009.

"The trainings were dangerous. There were jungle survival, marksmanship, platoon run and rappelling. The most difficult was jungle survival. We had to hike 15 to 30 kilometers in the wilderness. Each one of us only brought biscuits, canned goods, cooking utensils and three bottles of 1.5-liter water. The supplies were not enough. We still needed to refill water on the mountain. Some of us were already hallucinating because of hunger and dehydration. But all of us survived and even enjoyed the training," she shared.

RIISING FROM THE RANKS

Out of 101 trainees, 60 have passed. But only 10 were chosen to become soldiers in their batch. Larona was one of them.

"I started as a Private, the lowest in the rank. There were times when I wanted to quit because some of my seniors were bullying me. Actually, it was still part of the training. A soldier should have no gripes and grudges. They were testing my maturity," said Larona who rose from the ranks and is now a Sergeant of the 12th Civil-Military Operation (CMO) Battalion.

Her task now includes monitoring the duties of the 100-personnel battalion. The CMO is a non-combatant unit that is involved in bringing humanitarian aid to communities.

"One of the tasks of the CMO is to help local government units and non-government organizations (NGOs). During disasters, we conduct search and rescue missions as well as relief, rehabilitation and recovery efforts," she explained.

BEING A HIJAB TROOPER

Larona's first mission as Sergeant is with the Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM). She was deployed on July 10, 2017 at the height of the Marawi Siege.

"When I received my order, the first thing that came to my mind was

that I might die in Marawi City. Upon arrival, we occupied two buildings at Lanao del Sur Provincial Capitol. We saw chaos in evacuation centers. The evacuees did not know where to sleep and get relief goods. There were also leftists who infiltrated us. They do medical missions as their front. They brought big speakers to brainwash the public against the military," she recalled.

Larona's superiors were alarmed. They deployed women in uniform and let them wear hijab as a sign of respect to the Maranao culture. Since that time, they became known as the Hijab Troopers.

"We conduct psychosocial support to child-survivors in evacuation centers. We observed in drawing activities that the children were depicting Martial Law as the cause of conflict. We corrected this misconception and explained to them that the military is here to help. We needed to schedule curfews and check all vehicles so their security will not be compromised," she said.

The Hijab Troopers also conduct medical missions, in partnership with other organizations like the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). The children in transitional shelters received free haircut and check-up, medicines, vitamins, dental kits, hygiene kits and food packs.

BRINGING CHANGES TO THE COMMUNITY

Because of their efforts, the children in the community became more open and started to perceive them as friends. The children are no longer scared of soldiers anymore. They are now happy to see them because they want to play, dance, sing, eat candies and learn things.

"We now get the cooperation of the community. They inform us in case they see suspicious elements in the area. But we also receive threats from people who do not want improvement," she shared.

But Larona chooses to ignore those threats and instead focuses on her duty which gives her fulfillment. If their troops leave Marawi, nobody will help the community.

"My service in the military became colorful. I am more fulfilled in serving the community. The children can still remember me and look up to me. They also want to become a soldier like me. This kind of fulfillment cannot be bought by money or any trophy from a contest. I told them that the Hijab Troopers will not leave until Marawi City can rise again," said Larona.

SHARON LARONA goes beyond the call of duty to help the survivors of the Marawi Siege.







SUSTAINING CHANGE

For 48 years, PBSP's legacy of uplifting lives through its programs in health, education, environment, and livelihood, lives on in the people we have helped and empowered in the past. Bound by a shared mission, they continue to give back by being change agents in their own communities.



Flora Heruela only wanted to be a member of the Bacsan Sapangdaku Farmers Association (BSFA) when PBSP helped organize the group in 2008.

However, the members who are upland farmers like her, saw how good a conversationalist she was that they nominated her to be their Public Relations Officer (PRO).

"I really like talking to people. That's probably why they wanted me to be their PRO. I just wanted to help our group as a member but since they trusted me and believed that I can serve better as an officer, I accepted the responsibility," the 48-year-old shared.

The creation of their group was a result of a five-year program PBSP implemented for the rehabilitation of the Buhisan Watershed and Forest Reserve (BWFR), one of Cebu's main sources of water. Since they belong to the original communities in the area, PBSP sought to improve their lives and include them in their activities and interventions.

"We used to be the watershed's enemies since we would cut trees and sell them for firewood or clear

TRAINED BY PBSP, Flora Heruela and her group now implement development projects for the Buhisan Watershed's long-term rehabilitation.

A GREENER FUTURE

A farmer trained by PBSP leads her group
to become better stewards of Cebu's prized watersheds

out large forests for our farms. But when PBSP came and introduced the program to us, I really saw their sincerity to help us. They gave us all these new technologies so we can benefit from them. That is how I know that they are there to really help us," Heruela added.

NURTURING THE WATERSHED

To help strengthen the group, PBSP provided BSFA with various trainings necessary to run an accredited people's association. These were complemented with trainings on resource mapping, basic watershed management, ecological governance, and eco-cultural tourism development to make them more attuned to the watershed's long-term rehabilitation.

To help steer them further away from environmentally harmful livelihood activities, PBSP introduced them to organic farming via vermiculture and organic livestock-raising. Manpower skills training and ecotourism-related enterprises such as food processing, handicraft, and tour guiding were also provided. In those early years, the group couldn't help but feel positively overwhelmed with all the knowledge they gained.

"There were a lot of trainings in those three to five years so we really learned a lot from them. All our life, we only just know one way to live but PBSP gave us all these possibilities and taught us how to do them. It was all eye-opening," she revealed.

For Heruela, the best memory she had from PBSP was when they started its major activity—the enrichment of over 100 hectares of forest cover in five years with indigenous and fruit trees. Aside from establishing and maintaining reforested areas, they were also mobilized to create greenbelt establishments, manage riparian zones, and take part in community-based forest protection.

That was the first time an organization like PBSP gave them so much trust in implementing these massive interventions. Even if the program ended in 2013, PBSP still continues to partner with them for other reforestation activities.

"We feel good whenever we see the fruits of our labor, and of all the people involved in this program. We are the ones who can really see the difference because we live here. We saw how our environment has changed. At random days, we would look at our mountains and still be surprised at how greener it has become. And every day, we feel proud because we know we are part of that change," she said.

FITTING INTO THE LEADERSHIP MOLD

From 2009 to 2012, Heruela went on to become the bookkeeper and vice chairman of the BSFA. Armed with the skills she learned from PBSP, she put it to good use by lobbying for projects from other donors when their group became inactive in 2017.

Through her persistence, she was able to seal a partnership with DENR to reforest 371 hectares of the Buhisan Watershed. She also got the support of companies for annual reforestation activities. All her hard work eventually led to her election as chairman of their group, a position she was hesitant to accept at first because of health reasons.

Now, BSFA continues to implement projects with PBSP and other partners. Because of their experience and efforts, their group became one of the go-to associations that DENR and other public and private agencies would tap for development projects in the watershed. This is a distinction Heruela feels proud to have achieved, and she helps ensure this by training young leaders with potential and passion to be her second-liners.

"There are times that rallying my members to help in this mission becomes so taxing that I feel like giving up. But all I want is for us to continue protecting this watershed and earn from it so we wouldn't end up hurting it again just for our own needs. I don't want the investment of PBSP to go to waste. I also want to prove that we can still continue with the task that PBSP has given us, which is to take care of our forests. We will continue to do this until we are here," Heruela said.

A LIFE-LONG MISSION

A product of PBSP, this NGO worker continues to hone future leaders for the development of Samar communities

In Rosario "Chat" Gonzaga's world, 72 is the new 40.

At this age, she still serves as administrator for Calbayog City while doing social development work on the side with various NGOs she helped found. This is the kind of person Gonzaga has become – the kind of woman PBSP wanted her to be when she was trained as a community organizer in the 1970s.

"This wasn't the future I imagined for myself at first. I wanted to become a nun and serve the Lord so I sneaked away from home and stayed at a convent. But my father learned of this and got sick with disappointment so I chose to become a teacher instead," she revealed.

To continue doing what she loved, she served the archdiocese of Calbayog's Kauswagan Social Action Center as its youth development coordinator while teaching at a public school for years. Then in 1974, PBSP was eyeing a long-term poverty reduction program for Samar and was considering the archdiocese as a partner since its development action center was already helping poor farmers and fishermen in the area.

To be a co-implementer of the PBSP's program, the center needed a supervisor on community organizing (CO) that PBSP would train for six months.

"We already sent two trainees in Manila before me but they both failed PBSP's monthly evaluation and screening process. Since we needed the project and I had little CO experience, I was sent instead. It really changed my life," Gonzaga shared.

For four months, she learned how to coordinate with different stakeholders, conduct trainings, strengthen communities, create policies, and make critical decisions. As part of their training, she was assigned to various slum areas to help out the organization. It was an experience she never thought she would thrive in. Her trainers praised her performance. Gonzaga realized that perhaps that was what the Lord wanted her to do – to serve communities in need.

EARLY CHALLENGES

Under Gonzaga's helm, the Development Action Center successfully provided micro-economic enterprises to farming communities. This feat earned them another three-year program from PBSP—this time expanding the assistance to wives and health workers in the area.

"Before tuberculosis (TB) control program became a national agenda, we were already training our workers how to diagnose and screen TB, and treat them in the earliest stages. Because of our success, UN visited us to observe our process as one of PBSP's models so it could possibly replicate it to other areas," she proudly said.

With her success in handling two projects, PBSP eventually took Gonzaga under its wing. One of her main tasks as a PBSP employee was to help promote people's participation in communities under its Samar Island Rural Development Program. For years, she would organize people's associations and work with municipal agriculturists on improving farming technologies to boost the agricultural productivity in Samar.

Her involvement, however, stopped in the early 1980s when her husband forced her to choose between work and family.

"It was one of the hardest decisions I had to make. He made me realize that I may have empowered communities but I was giving even lesser time for my children because I was out all the time. I needed to reevaluate how to properly balance my life so I can do both more harmoniously. So, I had to quit," she said.

TRUST AS AN INVESTMENT

But PBSP did not let go of Gonzaga without entrusting a new mission to her. The NGO was also transitioning to a new development strategy that was more proponent-led and area resource-based, and it wanted Gonzaga to replicate PBSP practices in leading local development efforts in the province.

This prompted her to co-found and organize the Western Samar Development Foundation (WESADEF) in 1987, which became PBSP's major partner in implementing its Area Resource Management (ARM) strategy. As WESADEF's founding executive director for five years, Gonzaga helped pool funds to improve Samar's carabao production, maintain a micro-lending fund and establish a women's center for victims of domestic violence. She also helped build facilities for training and offices, and continued training second-liners to help sustain the foundation's development pace.

After her stint at WESADEF, Gonzaga became a city councilor, presidential appointee, city economic enterprise officer, and later as the

personal financial steward for Amb. Bienvenido Tan's scholarship program.

She was also instrumental in the successful implementation of the local development assistance program, where she worked with four towns in improving their food productivity. All these roles she had accomplished with flying colors.

"You have to take your work seriously so people will trust you. And the more you gain their trust, the more they will believe in what you say and what you want them to do, which makes the programs that we do even more successful," Gonzaga revealed as her recipe for success.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS, MOLDING LEADERS

Gonzaga does not believe in mediocre work, and she proves this by not just creating leaders but also award-winning organizations and children.

She had created such a strong foundation in WESADEF that it still is one of the most active organizations in Samar today. The organization, through its continuous work with its women's center, was chosen as one of the grand finalists of the Eduardo Aboitiz Award for Outstanding Institutions in RAFI's 2015 Triennial Awards. Recently, she also represented a group she held organize, the Save the Calbayog Rivers Foundation, when it received a regional award from the DENR for its environmental efforts.

As for the people she trained through the years, they all went on to become founders and executive directors of notable organizations. The scholars she facilitated now have high-ranking positions in several agencies. Meanwhile, two of her children are now development workers, thanks to their early exposure to their mother's work when they were still young.

"Sometimes, people would ask why I am so generous with sharing my skills to those who need it. To be honest, I do not understand why they ask this as I was never stringent with knowledge. I feel proud that many of those I trained are in much better positions than where I am now. That only means I succeeded in teaching them. The more leaders we have, the more development accomplishments we can do. After all, working for development never ends. And as long as we are still able to do it, we should continue to help more communities in need," Gonzaga said.



ROSARIO GONZAGA applies the lessons she learned from PBSP in molding new development workers and in improving the plight of people in Samar.



WOMEN ON BOARD

Stories of three exemplary women who are at the helm of their companies, and are making change happen in the boardroom and in the country

In this section, our Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officers share how they are breaking barriers, initiating innovations, and transforming their industries to contribute to the daunting task of nation-building.

WHAT SHE'S MADE OF

IBM Philippines top honcho and PBSP Trustee Aileen Judan-Jiao is all heart and soul for life-long learning and doing social good

For IBM Philippines President and Country General Manager Aileen Judan-Jiao, education is one's real asset and ticket to a better life. Young or old, rich or poor, it equalizes everything. Anyone can succeed with the right kind of education.

Aileen took these nuggets of wisdom from her father seriously, used it in shaping her would-be career, and is now championing it in her company and in their advocacy to produce the country's future leaders.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Growing up, Aileen spent summer vacations in Nueva Ecija where her classroom was their family farm. The fourth in a brood of six, she gamely accomplished whatever her four brothers did, and that includes experiencing every kind of adventure a farm girl could ever have.

"We spent summers in the ricefields. I climbed trees, rode a *kalabaw* (water buffalo) walked on dikes in the ricefields, and swam in waterfalls in the middle of the field. In the Judan family, swimming is a form of survival so the earliest age that you can swim, the better. We were taught how to dive by running after tossed coins and slimy *tilapia* (African freshwater cichlid fish). That was the kind of training I had," Aileen shared.

Since her parents were hardcore educators, their family would always be engaged in some learning activity even at home to develop their life skills and train them to be independent.

"On weekends, my dad, a college professor and a CPA (Certified Public Accountant), would always teach us various things – carpentry, repairing an engine, cleaning and maintaining cars, etc. It was like having an elective at home! I did a lot of cooking, baking, and gardening. I also learned about cars and up to now, I maintain my own car. The principle is you cannot drive if you don't know how to maintain your car," she revealed.

PURSUING HER PASSION

In college, Aileen chose to take up Computer Science at the Ateneo de Manila University, a course she felt was going to be in-demand in the future.

"When the computer started to play a big role for us, I felt this was something that will make it a few years from now. I was relatively above average in Math and Science, and my dad encouraged me to think of what will really leverage that. Computer Science was a fairly new course at that time and not many women go into that. If I am not mistaken, from my high school, I was the only one," she said.

According to her, Computer Science in today's language, is like real STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

"If you think about the core of it, it is really problem solving, but you have a more structured way of doing it. Today, coding is very famous but that was already Computer Science way before. I became quite comfortable with that and I'm lucky that I did not shift. Like what my dad would always say, 'If that's your bet,

stick to it and make sure that's your passion,'" she added.

RISING FROM THE RANKS

Aileen first worked in a company that provided technical support for laser printers. Then, she went on to become the National Information Officer for a project of the USAID with the Bureau of Export Trade which matched exporters in different cities in the Philippines to buyers from overseas.

Later on, she joined IBM Philippines as a systems engineer. "At that time, IBM was changing its culture to be more open. Usually, it was promoting from within, but then they started infusing external talent. I was among the first batch of competitive hires. We were doing open systems for IBM in the Philippines. It was a very technical job and I was the only woman in a team of two men," she shared.

While Aileen did not experience discrimination in IBM which is a no-gender bias workplace, she had her share during a few client calls.

"As a systems engineer, you support a technical function. So, I would break apart a physical server with my hands and tools, in office attire, at that. So, you sort of get stereotyped that an engineer can only be a man. You can sense the discomfort from the clients. But when that happens, you just have to prove that you can do it and they respect you for it. In today's Filipino terms, 'Keri lang!' (I can do it!)," she quipped.



AS A LEADER, Aileen Judan-Jiao harnesses the power of diversity in the different personalities of her employees to enable them to become the best of who they are and makes it work as a team.

“
Our purpose is being essential to our clients, to IBM and to the world. You cannot do innovation for innovation's sake. Even if you invent the greatest and the best technology, what will you use it for?...I think the new generation of business leaders should think this way. How do we use the core of our own businesses for social good?
”

'THINK IBM'

Now at the helm of one of the leading cognitive solutions and cloud platform companies, Aileen is proud to be part of a dedicated workforce that creates innovations that matter to the Philippines and the world.

Among these innovations, include using artificial intelligence to come up with better treatment options for cancer, diabetes and for finding potential disease outbreaks. They're also applying technological breakthroughs for all industries.

IBM even put up an Intelligent Operations Center for Emergency Management in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) to aid the government in the collaboration with partners and in the integration of data to help survivors in the affected areas in Central Visayas.

“Our purpose is being essential to our clients, to IBM and to the world. You cannot do innovation for innovation's sake. Even if you invent the greatest and the best technology, what will you use it for? If you look at our corporate citizenship and volunteerism, it's not the business side of IBM but you use the same technology for a different purpose. I think the new generation of business leaders should think this way. How do we use the core of our own businesses for social good?” she explains.

DOING MEANINGFUL WORK

Corporate citizenship and employee volunteerism are important aspects of being an IBMer. Employees offer their time, talent and expertise to do meaningful work not just in the communities they serve but in other places and areas of discipline as well.

Employees can propose any CSR project of their own, and undertake it on weekends or after work. Once they reach a certain number of hours, they can ask for a grant from the company to support their cause.

In 2018, Aileen said about 13 percent of Filipino IBMers logged 5,100 hours for volunteer work. Among the most notable initiatives include providing consulting work to PAGASA on

enhancing the ability to do predictive weather; developing analytics to help farmers improve the yield of corn; helping the International Rice Research Institute develop its fully virtual library; helping the DOST on knowledge management and cybersecurity; conducting innovation boot camps where senior public high school students in Cebu are taught about coding and pitching their projects; and educating college students from Taguig City University on design thinking and blockchain as well as soft skills.

Aileen is also heavily involved in the Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH), an education model co-developed by IBM together with educators and government leaders to help students build the skills they would need for “new collar” jobs or the so-called careers of the future. Among these are automation specialist, application testing, digital design developer and more.

The six-year program is embedded in the curriculum of several public schools in IBM sites internationally. With the help of industry partners and IBMers, students from Grades 9 to 14 are educated on both soft and hard skills through lessons and on-on-one mentoring. They are also given sufficient exposure to real work in companies. This gives them access to better job opportunities. When they graduate, they earn the distinction of being a product of P-TECH and are thus given priority for interviews in IBM and in their partner companies.

The best part about P-TECH is that it is free. Aileen said for the Philippines, it will be offered to underserved students from selected public schools in Taguig starting school year 2019-2020.

“Other than encouraging investments and helping businesses grow in the Philippines with thousands of our employees, it's using our talent, technology and expertise for social good. Since education is a part of this, I think this will be our long-term contribution because you're helping build a sustainable pool of talent for the Philippines. You can attract investment but if you cannot sustain the investment, it will go away. So, we have to do our part in making sure that we continue to be a talent magnet with very high value skills and then make all these new and advanced technologies available for the country,” Aileen concluded.





DORIS MAGSAYSAY-HO'S multi-cultural experiences further deepen her nationalism and drive to help bring better public service in the Philippines.

A WOMAN'S WORTH

Magsaysay Group of Companies President and CEO Doris Magsaysay-Ho shares her journey in finding her value as a woman, a mother, a business leader, and a Filipino

Growing up in various countries was beneficial to Doris Magsaysay-Ho whose experiences made a profound impact in the way she lives her life, runs her businesses and pursues her advocacies.

Born to the late Robert Ho, a prominent Chinese businessman and to Filipina modernist painter, the late Anita Corpus Magsaysay-Ho, Doris lived a good life surrounded by business, art, culture and lots of travel.

"I really loved our life in Manila. My mother painted and all her friends were from the cultural and artistic circles. My dad was very active in the business community. But when I was nine, we left and lived in Sao Paolo, Brazil; then moved to Tokyo, Japan where our father established the Magsaysay international shipping business. We then lived in Vancouver and Montreal in Canada for high school and America for college and graduate school. My parents set up their main residence in Hong Kong in the 1970's. We had the amazing privilege of spending summer vacations in Canada, Tokyo, Manila or Hong Kong wherever my parents were," Doris revealed.

In spite of constantly transferring from one country to another, Doris had a happy and stable childhood. She is grateful to her parents for teaching her and her four siblings to love and enjoy their lives, wherever they were and whatever they were doing.

"My parents brought us up as global kids. We felt very comfortable wherever we were. We were taught

to be considerate and sensitive to our surroundings, the traditions, values and norms of the culture. I am so grateful to them for the gift they gave us – to be humble, confident, curious but grounded and most of all sensitive and considerate as a value that transcends cultural differences," shared Doris.

Serendipitously, she married a banker who was assigned to head the bank's Manila office, and has settled here.

KEEPING A SENSE OF PATRIOTISM

Amid all those global influences, Doris stayed in touch with her Filipino roots. Their family stayed very close to their relatives. She would be her mother's driver whenever friends from the Philippines would visit them in Canada and always felt she was a Filipina. In college, her best friends were Filipinos.

"Because I left the country at such a young age, I care for the country very deeply...perhaps because I had so little of the joy of living here." I had a great opportunity to witness the cities I lived in, transform into beautiful livable places with great infrastructure, public spaces and heritage. I know from that experience, that these countries and cities succeeded because of a strong civil service guided by a strong philosophy and long-term view to serve their people well," she said.

PUSHING FOR A BETTER COUNTRY

For Doris, just by looking at the inequality and poverty, means that the status quo is no longer an option.

"I believe we need to, first, change our mindset...to have a self-determined

national ambition and vision in areas we can most succeed in. Having been a representative of the APEC Business Council for over 10 years, I see that we need to be much more strategic in identifying the industry sectors we can be most competitive in because our ASEAN and APEC neighbors think this way.

We have one great asset- people. Yes, go earn and learn to be the best in those sectors and return home to contribute to the productivity of our economy. Having a clear strategy would attract foreign direct investors with capital and knowledge, and inspire the diaspora to return home. We owe it to our professionals and workers to find a way to a good job at home." Doris pointed out.

Doris has been working with her maritime industry colleagues to create a strategy for the Philippine maritime industry.

"Today, we have a robust seafaring industry developed by the manning, education and training sectors. We also have a ship repair and shipbuilding sector...We need to develop the Philippine Flag as a national flag registry, support the domestic shipping industry with better port infrastructure and larger trade volumes and make the country a maritime service center to compete with Singapore and Hong Kong so our professional mariners find great career opportunities from shore to ship and ship to shore," she said.

In the shipping and logistics business, Doris sees how trade imbalances and small volumes contribute to costs.

“

I believe we need to first change our mindset....to have a self-determined national ambition and vision in areas we can most succeed in... Having a clear strategy would attract foreign direct investors with capital and knowledge, and inspire the diaspora to return home. We owe it to our professionals and workers to find a way to a good job at home.

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"For every 10 containers of imports, only two to three go out full. For every 10 containers going southbound, only four come back full," she revealed.

Doris believes that we must more aggressively develop clusters of production surrounding ports throughout the country. "Shipping follows trade. So, if volumes are small, ships will be small, and a lack of economy of scale will mean inefficient cost structures. Production clusters around modern purposeful ports will also mean less logistics costs and waste of resources and time."

Cluster development would also be the greatest way to help MSMEs to become part of the value chain especially when big businesses really embrace inclusive business concepts.

"When a big company looks at a smaller company as a key, long-term strategic partner in its value chain, it means...and I know from my own experience...that I would work hard, and invest long-term to help my customer succeed," she said.

Because of these long-term relationships with key customers, Magsaysay invests heavily in education and training to ensure its people have the capacity and knowledge aligned with global standards and industry needs.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND MOTHERS

"The shipping industry may be a man's world. But my dad always told me, 'Do not try to be a man, because you will fail. Just be yourself.' So, I think women should celebrate our uniqueness and be fearless about our differences," she said.

But the hardest struggle of career women is when they become wives and mothers, and have to juggle work and family life. Doris had her share of difficulty managing work and taking care of her three children. She was

lucky to work in a family business that allowed flexibility on her time.

But when she witnessed her daughter Alexandra Cecala's struggle to balance work and family, she realized that something more systemic had to be done. Together with the Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment headed by Julia Abad, and with Maricel Pangillinan, they are developing a course on Family Leadership and Management, to give both working mothers and fathers the tools they need to become effective at work and at home.

"As working mothers (and fathers), half of our attention at work is distracted by our concerns at home. Companies, therefore, need to acknowledge that the home is equally important. We should provide a culture that is more open and understanding of that reality. I've said that in my deathbed, I will not wonder whether I was a good business person, I will wonder whether I was a good mother," she said.

Among the subjects in this unique course are skills to create a vision and mission for the family, building teamwork with children, and financial planning

"I believe the one factor that kept my family close together, notwithstanding that our father worked in Japan, and some siblings were at boarding school, was our family mission. When my dad would come home, he would bring out a family chart he always kept with him. He would ask each of us to give updates and to share our latest goals. 'Where are you now?' 'How well did you achieve your goals?' How did it contribute to the family as a whole?" revealed Doris.

With a goal to share the course with overseas Filipinos and other companies, Doris is hoping that we are able to build strong families, even when they are separated by distances of work, so we can all contribute to a greater, more just and confident society.

TRUE CALLING

Philippine Daily Inquirer President and CEO Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez strives to be a catalyst for change by doing meaningful work in her company and foundations

At the age of 15, Alexandra “Sandy” Prieto-Romualdez had a life-changing immersion that awakened her sense of social responsibility.

The weeklong homestay with a farmer in Bacolod, Negros Occidental did not only get her out of her comfort zone but also exposed her to the plight of the poor and the need to get them out of poverty.

Eventually, this humbling experience led her to a continuing journey of doing social work through her foundations and in the media as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE

“Living with the farmers just opened up my consciousness, my whole being. It broke down barriers and made me sensitive to how others live. What struck me was the stark difference of his life compared to mine, and the idea of sharing lives. After learning what the farmer had to do to be able to make ends meet, I realized how petty my problems seemed compared to his,” revealed Sandy of her first school immersion trip that was part of a leadership training.

As the fourth in a family of five children, Sandy lived a sheltered life while growing up. Her routine consisted of school on weekdays, Friday dinners with her family and fun vacations in Baguio with relatives. She also had happy

memories of playing with spiders, marbles and basketball with her brothers.

So for Sandy, going on that immersion trip was truly an eye-opening experience that left her thirsting for more.

“I have to say in the beginning that it (the immersion) was somehow a bit messianic. I felt like I wanted to save the world, eradicate poverty! In my second immersion, our goal was to go there and teach but on my way home, I realized that I actually learned so much more from them,” she shared.

Since then, the desire to help never left her mind. In fact, she disclosed that there were moments of confusion, contradiction and guilt but as a high schooler then, she knew that she couldn't do so much.

TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Bent on taking that path, Sandy took up Sociology in college but later shifted to Social Work. Then, she went back and graduated with a degree in Sociology. In her junior year, she went to Kenya on a study program and lived there for six months to further deepen her understanding of social issues.

“I studied how a country is run and how they grew and developed. At one point, I could speak fluent Bantu Swahili. I went to the place called School for International Living. It was experiential. We lived with the Masai for a week. At that time, the issue was how

can one live in a country that was getting more and more developed? How can one preserve indigenous culture side by side with development?” recalled Sandy who also volunteered with an NGO in Kenya.

After graduation, Sandy was determined to go into community development so she took up a Master's degree in Development Management at the Asian Institute of Management. But while she was about to jump into social development work, she was called to do something for her family.

FINDING HER PURPOSE

Sandy's brother Louie who was managing the family business, Philippine Daily Inquirer, passed away in a motorcycle accident. Her mother, Marixi, asked her to take his place. But Sandy wanted to try it out first and asked to be given three months to decide.

“I didn't want it to be given to me even if I'm not fit for the job. It's important that you find the connection and that my mom feels that I'll be good at it. So I immersed myself in the different aspects of the company: editorial, reportorial work, research, HR, and I fell in love with it. The mission of the Inquirer which is to be a catalyst for social progress and change, just connected with what I wanted to do. From wanting to make a difference and contribute in high school, it resonated very deeply in my heart that this is what I was meant to do and where I was meant to be,” she shared.



ALEXANDRA PRIETO-ROMUALDEZ finds fulfillment in helping create change through the Inquirer and her foundation work.

“

We hope that with the Inquirer we are able to help create change. We hope to empower people to make better choices. When there are issues that need to be raised, we hope to be faithful in being able to raise those issues and call attention to these anomalies so that attention could be finally given. We hope to highlight the good work to be applauded so we can help them along the way and enable them to continue with their work.

”

And true enough, Sandy embarked on doing her brand of social work throughout her 25 years in the Inquirer and in the media industry.

Internally, she built a day school for her employees' children. She also provided a place for the lactating mothers to prepare their breastmilk and even a refrigerator to store them.

Sandy who became the first female media company president, also promoted deserving female executives to high positions in the Inquirer. This was done at a time when not many women were placed in top positions in business. Inquirer was also the first to craft a policy on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace way before the law was passed.

Through its Inquirer Newsboy Foundation, Inc., the company was able to produce over 1,000 graduates in the elementary, high school and college levels. They are the children of Inquirer's most treasured newsboys who are sent to school through a scholarship program. The Inquirer Academy, on the other hand, was established to provide continuing education to professionals and individuals.

Sandy also used the power of the pen to champion several causes that include children, youth, health, education and the environment. Apart from inspiring action through journalism, Inquirer has also directly participated in development work.

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In 1998, Sandy went deep into social work by establishing the Gifts & Graces Fair Trade Foundation, Inc. which partners with women artisans by marketing their

products and providing sustainable income through constant orders. The foundation works with 21 partner-communities which are urban women, former prisoners, indigenous peoples, fisher folk and farmers. She is also the co-founder of Hands-on Manila Foundation, Inc. which mobilizes people to volunteer their time, talent and resource to help address the country's social, educational and environmental needs.

THE BUSINESS OF DOING GOOD

With the extent of problems today, Sandy sees no reason why businesses should not be doing CSR work. In fact, she thinks doing CSR that is aligned to their business is more sustainable.

“We live in a country where 50 percent of Filipinos still live below the poverty line. So, I don't see any reason why businesses should not be in CSR. First, you have to be a good employer by doing responsible business practices. Second, if you've reached a certain level of success, having a third bottom line is so important. Before, people frowned upon CSR that was related to their business. But I would like to think that there is a growing change and trend now that CSR should be connected to what you do. It's more sustainable if it's connected to what you do because you are able to do more,” she explained.

But she added that there shouldn't be duplication of efforts. Instead, companies should join forces or do complementing initiatives.

“In my low moments, sometimes I wonder why we have a lot of NGOs but still the situation has not changed. I think there has to be more concerted efforts, more study and analysis on how to do it in such a way that it gives greater impact. That is why the idea of PBSP is a fantastic one. Being able to consolidate contributions of the companies and leaving it to them as the experts to run those programs is important,” Sandy underscored.

For Sandy, the journey she took early in life may have had several detours and stops, but that's what made reaching the destination even more meaningful.





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