

CHANGED

THE GIRL IN THE IRON MASK

A Grade 12 student in Cagayan de Oro hopes to lift her family out of poverty through welding



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.

PBSP scales up impact by adopting the Collective Impact strategy to solve large, complex, systemic problems. PBSP organizes Platforms for Collective Engagements (PlaCEs) to ensure alignment and sustainability of initiatives by multiple stakeholders.

Responding to the changing landscape of CSR, PBSP's brand of corporate citizenship taps into the core business competencies of companies and promotes inclusive business as a strategy. PBSP also continues to strategically engage companies through social investment, responsible business practices, and philanthropy.

PBSP creates sustainable solutions to societal problems in its core program areas which are Health, Education, Environment, and Livelihood and Enterprise Development. It also provides off-the-shelf options for engagement of companies and their employees.

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



UPLIFTING LIVES.



NEW GRADUATES of a digital skills training project jointly supported by Accenture in the Philippines and Philippine Business for Social Progress and implemented by Virtualahan, get a chance to work online and earn income for their families.

ABOUT THE COVER



On the cover is Irah Jane Empuerto, a senior high school student taking up Shielded Metal Arc Welding course at Lapasan National High School in Cagayan de Oro City. Through PBSP's provision of welding equipment, Empuerto and her fellow students were able to fully develop their skills in welding. This enabled them to earn a National Certificate I (NCI) from TESDA, which makes them job-ready. For Empuerto, it is one step closer to achieving her dreams.

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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A MISSION OF PEACE AND SERVICE

A Muslim leader is spared from the siege
to fulfill a mission

Anna Zenaida Unte Alonto was the only one traversing Basak Malutlut Highway at the height of the conflict in Marawi City. The place was like a ghost town for several weeks.

"I really mustered my strength. I was shivering while driving. I could not see anything in the streets except military personnel. If a stray bullet would hit me, so be it," said Alonto, the Assistant Schools Division Superintendent (ASDS) of the Department of Education (DepEd) Division in Marawi City.

At that time, Alonto, a volunteer of the Provincial Crisis Management Committee, was heading to the provincial capitol to attend a meeting. She is known to be a strong-willed person but has a soft spot for others. This time, she was worried of her teachers and students who were

affected by the siege and didn't have any qualms risking her life for them.

"I could not forget the day when we had our first general teachers' meeting since the siege began. I was crying almost half the day when I saw my colleagues. Their faces and clothes were not the usual. Most of them had no make-up and some were just wearing torn clothes and slippers," said Alonto who is fondly called Chikee by her family and friends.

She was so concerned of their welfare that when she returned home, she gathered some of her clothes, shoes and other belongings to share with the teachers. She also communicated with some of them on Facebook, asking how she could help.

This doesn't mean Alonto was not affected during the siege. In fact, she

was trapped in her house for a week because she didn't want to leave behind his father who is a military officer. There was no electricity and they were kept wide awake all night by bombs exploding all over. Fortunately, her family did not experience hunger because there was food to last them for some days. Her son who is a member of the Provincial Crisis Management Committee also brought them groceries and supplies.

Thankfully, her house was not damaged since they are located near a military camp in Langcaf, Marawi City.

A MISSION TO SERVE

Alonto knew she had a special mission to do – to attend to displaced teachers and learners. She was designated as Deputy Focal Person of the DepEd Autonomous Region of Muslim

Mindanao (ARMM) Communication and OpCen. Part of her tasks is to track teachers and learners who were displaced by the conflict.

"At first, we were only able to account 500 teachers out of 1,600. But now we have accounted 1,300 warm bodies¹. The rest are still out there but they are all well and safe. Some migrated to other places. For the learners, we did house-to-house tracking and found some 433 school-aged children in Saguwaran who were not in school. They are just in evacuation centers and other places. It is difficult to track. There are still other displaced learners as far as Visayas and Luzon. As of the moment (Dec. 10, 2017), we have accounted 38,000 learners out of 45,000 for both public and private schools," said Alonto.

Apart from tracking them, Alonto and her team in DepEd made sure that their welfare is addressed immediately. DepEd ARMM procured food items and non-food items like bags, family packs, hygiene kits, medicines and school supplies.

From partner-agencies, it was PBSP who first responded, distributing "buckets of love" or non-food items (plastic plates, cups, utensils, and health kits), student and teacher kits (bags, shirts, towel and slippers), boxes of storybooks, reference and other learning materials, as well as gifts that uplift the spirit (cosmetics).

"I like PBSP because they responded right away and they made sure to ask first our priority needs. Of course, it is good to receive a lot of things but it is best to receive what we really need because we are in a critical situation," she explained.

USING EDUCATION TO REBUILD LIVES

These interventions from DepEd, PBSP, and other organizations helped the evacuees survive during those difficult times.

"It was like aiding them back to normalcy. It made them feel better. It helped them accept reality that they need to maximize whatever is available. The relief goods inspired them to be more resilient," she shared.

For her part, Alonto's experience and challenging role during the siege has changed her a lot.

"It made me a selfless person. It humbled me in the sense that I view everyone now as important. I could not do this job alone if not for my staff. I am not a born leader but I learned to become one and the Marawi experience served like a practical application of the trainings I have attended," she revealed.

While the conflict has ended, Alonto's mission in rebuilding the lives of her teachers and students continues. Using education to promote peace and recover from the effects of the siege, she is bent on recapacitating teachers to enable them to start anew and become more effective in their profession.

"Our teachers for the last few months have gone idle because of the conflict. We need to capacitate them again. We also need to strengthen culture sensitivity, character-building, peace education and civic education,

especially in the lower grade levels so the students can carry it when they reach high school. The role of educating our children does not only lie in DepEd. It must be a collaborative effort. All stakeholders like the Local School Board (LSB), Local Government Unit (LGU), Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs) and other donor agencies must help each other," Alonto said.

ANNA ZENAIDA UNTE
ALONTO offers selfless service to teachers affected by the Marawi conflict.



¹ Figures as of Dec. 10, 2017 during the interview

SERVICE IN THE TIME OF WAR

For a local NGO leader in Mindanao,
every setback is a reason to serve more

Salic Ibrahim and his wife Sinab Datu were busy managing their flourishing tile business in Lanao del Sur when the calling to do development work struck them. Since then, there was no turning back for the couple who made it their mission to help bring peace, gender equality, education, and livelihood in Mindanao.

It was in 1998 when they volunteered during the national elections and saw how cheating influenced the results in their area. That incident awakened in them a sense of patriotism and the need to do something for the country. This led them to form the Maranao People Development Center (MARADECA), along with relatives, friends, teachers and students who believed in their cause.

While the first two years was a fulfilling experience of serving internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the all-out war against the MILF during then President Joseph Estrada's term, managing the NGO turned out to be an uphill climb.

"We were volunteers then so we didn't have a salary but we were able to do many programs for the IDPs. In 2002, our resources were depleted. So it came to the



point when we had to choose between our business and the NGO. And since getting rich was never our goal, we chose the NGO despite having only about very little pooled money from our friends and family, to sustain it," recalled Ibrahim, the head of MARADECA.

SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT STEPS

Ibrahim and his staff learned everything they needed to know to capacitate themselves, and to be equipped to handle development work. VSO Philippines taught them how to do proposals, organizational management and financial management. PBSP, on the other hand, gave them funding to construct the Angelo King building in Marantao which serves as the office of their 200 employees to this day.

One work Ibrahim is proud of is helping a traditional community in Buadiposo Buntong practice gender equality. Without imposing on them, they made the people realize the different but equally significant roles of men and women.

"While the fathers are breadwinners, the mothers also work hard, even at night to care for their family. Through non-stop discussions, the people realized that men should work together with their spouses in improving the condition of their families. Eventually, we saw men doing household chores, women being allowed to make decisions, and families getting a TV set which is a sign of increased income," shared Ibrahim who was further inspired to serve with their little successes.

People empowerment and peace-building initiatives became the focus as he saw the need to train communities and LGUs in a province saddled with *rido* or clan feuds on conflict management. MARADECA also worked with school administrators, guidance counsellors, Parent-Teacher Associations, and the youth in fighting extremism. They also conduct consultations with communities on the Bangsamoro Basic Law and help lobby for its enactment in Congress.

But with every progress they make in a community on peace-building, there comes a war that destroys it. Still, Ibrahim gets pumped up with every setback. Instead of giving up, he gets more motivated to serve and continue the cause.

SALIC IBRAHIM, promotes peace, gender equality, and people empowerment in Mindanao.

RISING UP TO HELP OTHERS

The five-month-long Marawi siege, which is so far the most devastating for the Maranaos, is no exception. When it occurred on May 23, 2017, Ibrahim was aboard a flight to Manila. His wife was in their office while his children brought him to the airport. They were lucky enough to be spared as his house was just a few blocks from that of terrorist leader Isnilon Hapilon where the conflict began.

He went back to rescue his family and staff, and fled Marawi to seek refuge at a safer place. They settled at his brother-in-law's house in Cagayan de Oro where they lived for a few months with 12 other families.

"Before, I found it hard to believe stories of evacuees sharing a house with 13 families. But when we became victims ourselves, I realized it was true. It was difficult, you could not even stretch your body while sleeping because of the cramped space. When going to the toilet, you had to be careful not to step on people sleeping on the floor," he recounted.

Amid all these, Ibrahim and his wife couldn't stop thinking of their staff and the other evacuees. They felt compelled to help despite their own plight.

"I told my family and my staff that we should be strong, *doon lang tayo makaka-recover at makakatulong sa iba. Tumayo tayo. Ikaw na mismo, tulungan mo sarili mo. Kasi kung manghina ka, maaapektuhan ka talaga.* (That's the only way that we could recover, and help other people. We have to rise up from this tragedy. You have to help yourself. If you become discouraged, you will be greatly affected.) We did not stop helping. We decided to be strong so we can serve the people," he said.

Ibrahim was able to rent an office space in Iligan which got easily flooded during storms. But they made do with it, turning it into a storage area for relief goods from PBSP, training center, and at night, an evacuation center.

"We are thankful to PBSP for being there, for the big help for the IDPs. We are happy that we were able to give them relief through PBSP, especially the home-based evacuees who did not receive help at first because the houses were not recognized as evacuation centers," Ibrahim said.

The war may be over now but the bullet hole in their office, lost belongings and the great ruins of Marawi are just a part of the painful experiences that further strengthen Ibrahim's resolve to serve his people, 24/7, no matter how difficult it may be.

What started out as an ordinary Tuesday afternoon on May 23, 2017 in the bustling city of Marawi and nearby municipalities in Lanao del Sur turned out to be the first day of terror for its residents and people working in these areas.

Sapiyah Abdulmoin, a community organizer of Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) was busy preparing for a community awareness session in a barangay near Saguaran, situated 15 minutes from Marawi.

Her parents, meanwhile, were in their residence in Brgy. Pagalongan Ditsaan-Ramain, a short 17-minute drive to Marawi. She and her three other siblings are working to support their family of six. Hers is a close-knit family who all went home in one house after work.

SEPARATED FROM HER FAMILY

When the Marawi siege erupted, everyone thought it was just the usual *rido* or clan feud that would end in a day. But when they learned that it was being waged by ISIS-inspired terrorists, Abdulmoin began to worry about her family. Worry turned to fear when she was told that her sister, a teacher in a school in Marawi, was held hostage.

“My father was trying to call but couldn’t reach me because there was no cell site. My mother wanted to fetch me at work like what she did with my other siblings but it was already dangerous to go out on the streets. I learned that my sister was held hostage along with 46 others while attending a seminar in school. My

family was helpless, they didn’t know how they were going to save her,” shared the 26-year-old Abdulmoin.

After two days of pleading with the terrorists, her sister and other teachers were finally freed. It was a gruelling and death-defying nine-hour walk from school to their house for her sister who just gave birth a couple of months ago. They had to take cover from air strikes, bombs and ground fighting that they passed along the way.

ATTENDING TO EVACUEES

Because going home was not an option at that time, Abdulmoin focused all her strength and attention in helping the 5,000 evacuees from Marawi who sought refuge at the Saguaran Municipal Hall.

For three months, she cooked for them, and led the distribution of relief goods. Initially, they were just five people working to accommodate the IDPs (internally displaced persons), including the Mayor who was being asked to leave the municipal hall because it was the next target of the terrorists.

“We didn’t leave because of the thousands of people already staying there. If we leave, what will happen to all these people? What will happen to Saguaran?” Abdulmoin pointed out.

In the first few days, there was food shortage because the truck carrying supplies was stranded in Iligan due to heavy traffic caused by fleeing evacuees. So they had to make do with whatever they had.

In the succeeding months until after the conflict, she said they continued to experience shortage in food and relief items when there weren’t enough to cater to the large volume of evacuees. As a result, some angry evacuees would get mad at them. But to be fair to all, Abdulmoin strictly enforced rules in distribution to ensure that everyone will be given their fair share.

“Every day, there were people asking why the others were given and they were not. I had to be very patient in explaining what happened and in assuring them that when new donations arrive, they would be the first ones to receive their share. It was a good thing that relief goods and kitchen utensils from PBSP arrived just in time and was enough for everyone, including the volunteers like us,” she recalled.

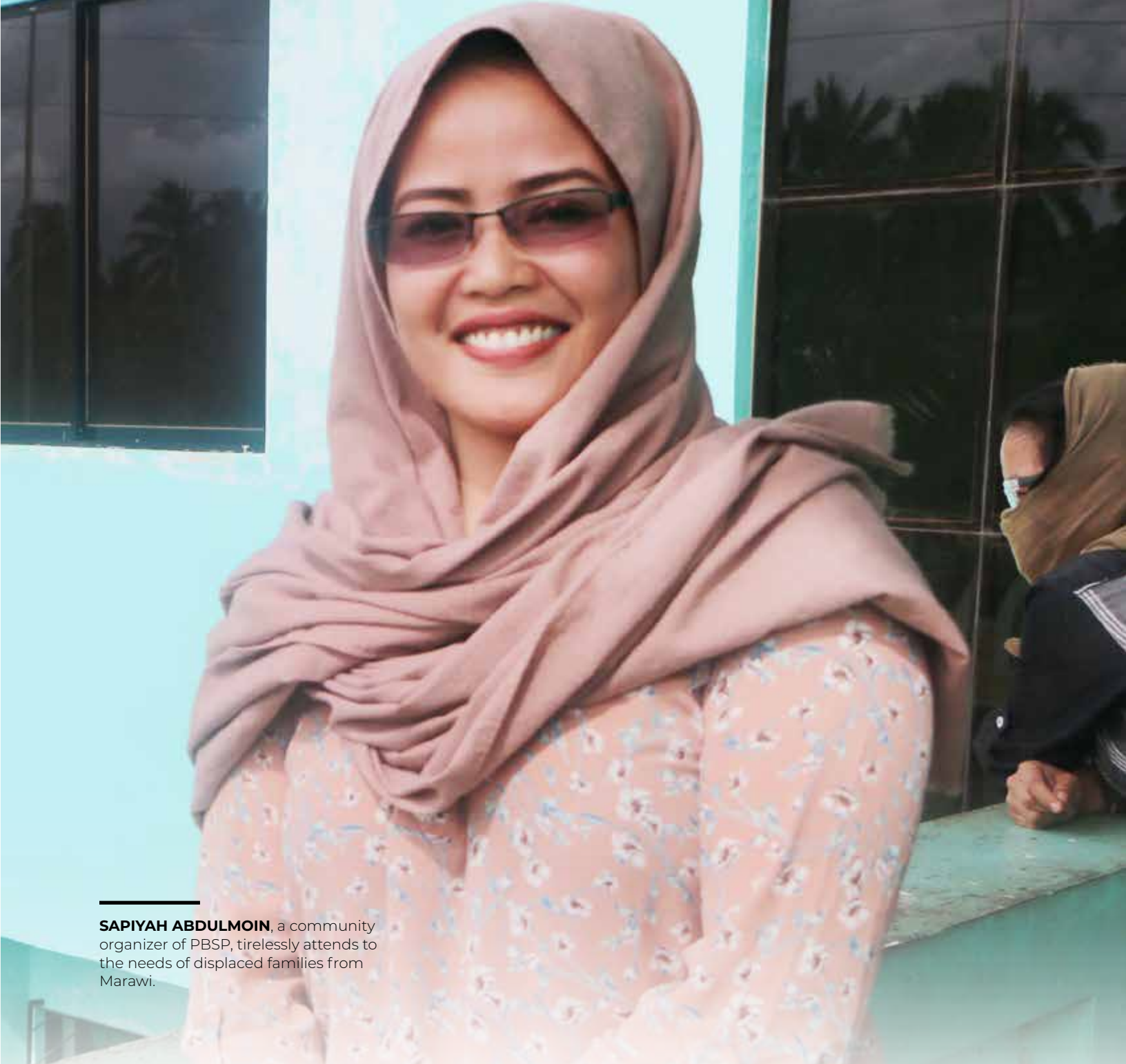
FINDING WAYS TO HELP

A few days after the conflict started, Abdulmoin thought she was going home. On board a van, she was about to enter the war-torn area when a bomb was planted on the bridge they were supposed to pass. Because of this, she returned to the municipal hall and just looked for other ways to help her family who was also running out of food supplies.

“Everything was expensive during the conflict. One sack of rice costs PhP6,000 while one tomato was prized at PhP20! I had to send them food and supplies even if it meant renting a delivery truck for PhP700 just to bring all the goods to my family,” she said.

IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Amid the fear and desperation of being separated from her family during the Marawi siege, a selfless PBSP staff chooses to help evacuees survive



SAPIYAH ABDULMOIN, a community organizer of PBSP, tirelessly attends to the needs of displaced families from Marawi.

After 54 days, Abdulmoin was finally able to go home via a longer route – a seven to eight-hour trip around Lake Lanao. But it was only for a day. After checking on their safety, Abdulmoin went back to Saguieran to continue her work.

This has been her situation for six months — daily attending to the needs of evacuees, leading a group of volunteers who work non-stop, and going home only twice within that period. In spite of such a tough situation, she has no regrets.

“I’m blessed because my family is safe. PBSP was always checking on me and even gave me financial assistance. But many evacuees needed my help so I had to be there for them,” she said.

With such an experience, Abdulmoin has become more appreciative of what she has and vows to make the most of her life from now on.

“I learned to use whatever resources I have wisely. At that time, I had to wash and wear only three sets of clothes for months. I also spend only on the

important things that my family and I need now. Most importantly, I live each day to the fullest. Whatever you can do today, do it now. Don’t wait to do it tomorrow. I’m also thankful for being more fortunate than the others. The others don’t have a house, lost their loved ones, and had a traumatic experience. You should understand them, you should continue to help,” she concluded.

MY FATHER OR MY SON

A father goes behind enemy lines to save his family and is forced to make a difficult choice

As he was having a talk with his panicking wife over the phone, Aminkhair Comadug could hear gunshots pierce through the air of Marawi City. But the fear those sounds gave him paled in comparison to what his wife – crying inconsolably – told him. His newborn son was having a severe asthma attack. The baby could not breathe.

At the same time, he learned that his father chose to stay behind in his house at the height of the armed conflict while his siblings, together with their mother, evacuated to safer ground.

Since Marawi is a city where the possibility of conflict lurks all the time, his sick father insisted to stay at home to keep watch. He was confident that just like the other clashes in the past, the siege would wane in a few days. Little did he know that it would lay waste to his beloved city for many months to come.

TORN BETWEEN HIS FAMILY

Comadug was faced with such a tough situation. Which family should he rescue first: his son or father? Finally, he came up with the most difficult decision he made in his life and it was to go for his wife and kids first because his baby needed immediate medical attention.

Comadug just arrived in Marawi after attending a seminar in Cotabato as part of his job as a Division Physical Facilities Coordinator of the Department of Education in Marawi. Going home is a gamble since armed fighters loyal to the terrorist group ISIS have just started to put the city under their control. Comadug had to act fast or he could lose the youngest of his three children.

He was approaching Mapandi Bridge when he spotted terrorists wearing rocket propelled-grenades around their bodies, blocking access. One of them

ordered a man on a motorcycle to pull over. He didn't know what to do. Letting them know that he came in peace, Comadug waved at them and greeted them in Arabic. By this time, he was no longer sure if he could still arrive at his house in time or end up as a hostage. To his surprise and relief, they let him pass and he was then able to rush his baby to the hospital to receive much-needed treatment.

He shared, "A friend offered me help. They mobilized two vans to fetch us from Mulondo going to Tamparan where they fed us and the children took a bath for the first time since the siege began in Marawi."

After securing the safety of his family, he set out for a second rescue mission, this time for his father. But arriving there, the streets were already barricaded by the military and civilians were barred from entering the city. He was baffled. His father needed oxygen supply and he's not sure until when the last tank he bought for him would last.

He decided he would try to go back for his father once it is allowed. Days later, he received tragic news. Neighbors who also stayed behind managed to send text messages to his family who evacuated. His father was gone.

The neighbors also shared that when they finally got the impression that the situation is worse than they thought and would last much longer, his father was telling them that his eldest son would surely return for him – a rescue that never came. This broke Comadug's heart even more.

"My father was surviving on instant noodles, the only food left in his house. Our neighbors said that he kept on telling them not to worry because I would soon come to rescue them. When he was dying, they said he kept on calling my name. They buried him at the back of the house," he said.

A man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a black button-down shirt and blue jeans, stands with his hands in his pockets. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The background is a brightly lit, colorful, and blurred indoor space, possibly a market or a fair, with various structures and lights in shades of green, yellow, and red.

RIISING FROM THE TRAGEDY

But instead of succumbing to grief, Comadug chose to see life positively. Besides, he still has his wife, children, mother and the rest of his siblings and relatives with him. He had to make a future for them.

Being displaced by the conflict, Comadug and his family were among those given relief goods by PBSP which helped them get through the toughest of times. As a way of giving back for the help that served as their lifeline, Comadug has been taking part in his city's rebirth, starting it with his family.

"The first thing I want to do is enrol my children in a permanent school so they will become regular students again, not as internally displaced learners. Another thing is that I want to help my siblings find permanent jobs. I am the only one providing for the needs of my mother and siblings. If I have an apple, I will still divide it into 14 to feed my family. Lastly, I will pursue my Master's degree in Science in Teaching Mathematics. Like me, my father was an academician. He was my inspiration in becoming a teacher. I want to honor his memory this way," he said.

Currently, Comadug participates in the rebuilding efforts in the city, particularly in schools. As part of his job, he helps ensure that the structures are safe for the children. Although he's an evacuee himself, he did not stop with just receiving help but became of help to others. People with a spirit like Comadug are proof that no matter how bad Marawi has suffered, there is still hope and certainty that the city will rise again stronger than it was.

AMINKHAIR COMADUG, remains strong amid the tragedies experienced by his family.

WEAVING NEW DREAMS

A working student from Marawi may have lost everything she values but the help she gets from strangers pushes her to rebuild her life



JUMAINA BATO uses the sewing machine she received from PBSP to make malongs (tube dresses) and earn to help her family.

Jumaina Bato is one of those resilient young Maranaos who would not let a five-month armed conflict break her. That is because the 16-year-old is made of tougher stuff and a steadfast faith that never wavers in times of crisis.

Bato used to be a working student who successfully balanced her studies and duties as a waitress at her aunt's restaurant in Lumbaca Madaya, Marawi City.

From morning to early afternoon, she would attend classes and do her homework as a Grade 10 student. Then from 7 p.m. onwards, she would take orders or help cook meals at her aunt's restaurant for Php2,500 a month. She used her salary to buy school requirements and to help support her family.

Whenever she had the time, she would also assist her mother, a dressmaker, and three other siblings in repairing malongs and uniforms at their own shop. Her father, on the other hand, was a farmer.

Life was difficult but they were happy and content until that fateful day of May 23, 2017.

FLEEING FOR LIFE

Bato was working early at the restaurant when siege began. Located in the city center, now more popularly known as the Ground Zero or battleground, the restaurant was just a few establishments away from where the ISIS-inspired terrorists were seen launching bombs to destroy some structures.

She hid with her relatives on the second floor of the restaurant, thinking it was just one of those clan wars which would end in just a few hours. When it didn't and there was massive evacuation, she joined her relatives in fleeing Marawi. They rode a truck that brought them to an evacuation center in Balo-i which they share to this day with 16 other families.

"When the siege happened, I was with my aunt in the restaurant, while my parents and siblings were

in our house. I didn't have the chance to be with them because everyone was already evacuating. There was fighting and shooting all around. We rode trucks to escape Marawi and they brought us to Iligan where we eventually got reunited with my family," she recalled.

But that reunion didn't last long because Bato's mother had no choice but to work as a helper in Manila after a month. Her father also left to find work in other places in Lanao del Sur. She was left with her aunt in the evacuation center.

A RAY OF HOPE

After the conflict, Bato and her family had nothing left. She lost her home, her school, her work, and her hard-earned belongings. She even lost a cousin who was killed by a sniper's bullet.

Fortunately, she was chosen to be among the 50 recipients of a sewing machine from PBSP, its member-companies, and partners. This gave Bato enough reason to smile, dream, and persevere again. She started to earn small money from the repair of malongs and other clothes from fellow evacuees. It assured her of instant money she used to buy food when there wasn't any relief distribution.

Later on, because of her hardworking nature and sunny disposition amid her plight, Bato was contracted as a volunteer at the Women Friendly Spaces set up by another NGO in their evacuation site. She would interview evacuees on their condition and needs. For this, she received 3,400 monthly allowance which she used to support her family's needs.

While her future remains bleak for now, Bato is not letting that experience dampen her spirits and determination to improve herself.

"Whatever happened to us will not stop me from striving to achieve my dreams. I'm saving money from sewing and from my allowance as a volunteer for my studies. I want to finish college. I want to take up a Computer course so I can work abroad," she said.



HANCE GEPANAGA is thankful that the Bayanihang Pampaaralan came to his school, helping him become a better student.

TURNING A NEW LEAF

A senior high school student finds motivation to fulfil his dreams through timely interventions

Hance Gepanaga was 13 when he dreamed of a better life.

Before that, he used to call himself a “typical lazy kid” who only wanted to play computer games. When his family’s only computer gave up because of his overplaying, his father told him to fix it himself if he wanted to continue with his whims. It was on these days of fixing and failing that he realized enough is enough.

“I played games because that was how I could escape our difficult life. But I realized how obsessed I was over something unimportant. That was not how I wanted to live the rest of my life,” Gepanaga said.

He decided to take up Information and Communications Technology in senior high school for two reasons: one, to be able to fix computers, and two, he heard the profession pays well. When Barrio Luz National High School (NHS) decided to offer the strand, he immediately enrolled and hoped for the best.

However, the road to success was not easy. His father who earns a meager pay as a construction worker, could not sustain their needs. As the eldest, he had to help find food for the family before he went to school. With no food and no money, he often came to school late, hungry, and unmotivated. In addition, his years of neglecting his studies finally caught up with him that it became increasingly harder to understand advanced concepts in his subjects. Because of this, his grades plummeted.

“I felt stuck. At one point, I truly believed I was just meant to stay this way forever, that I really have no chance of a better life,” he lamented.

SILVER LINING

All these changed when the Bayanihang Pampaaralan consortium convened by PBSP chose Bo. Luz NHS as a beneficiary of its educational assistance. For two years, the school received feeding, tutorial sessions and facility

repairs so it can efficiently conduct its senior high school program.

The feeding program which Gepanaga was a beneficiary of, lasted for two months, and he fondly recalls those days as one of the best moments of his life.

“At first, when my teacher told me I was handpicked because of my tardiness and absences, I felt ashamed. I did not want to go to the feeding area because I did not want my classmates to see me. But when I realized how many we were and how good the food was, I even became the leader who would urge my colleagues to have our lunch,” he said.

He also observed the changes in himself: a full stomach made him happy and made him more willing to participate in class, something that his classmates observed and told him.

Aside from the feeding, he also benefitted from the tutorials provided by the assistance. From the sessions, Gepanaga learned how to develop effective study habits so he can catch up with his lessons. His favorite subject now is Math which used to be his weakest link.

“I took the afternoon shift so my tutorials would start an hour before our free lunch. My tutors were very patient with me, and they knew how to teach me concepts so I can understand them,” he said.

MOVING FORWARD

From 78, Gepanaga’s grades now range from 84 to 89. He also has a complete attendance in school, making him one of the better performers of his section. In fact, he would even teach some lessons to his classmates, an accomplishment he is most proud of.

“It was all because our tutorials were very advanced. I feel better about myself, I feel more motivated to chase my dreams. I am so thankful for the assistance because without it, I would still feel like I am nothing,” he said.

COVER STORY:

THE GIRL IN THE IRON MASK

A Grade 12 student in Cagayan de Oro hopes
to lift her family out of poverty through welding

Looking like the knights of medieval times, students clad in their full working gear fill the area with thousands of sparks as their welding rods make contact with metal. Amid the intense heat brought by their thick clothing and embers bouncing everywhere, they appear to be deeply absorbed in what they're doing, making sure they'll get everything perfect.

It is unusual for a woman to wear such rugged attire but 18-year-old Grade 12 student Irah Jane Empuerto is tearing down gender stereotypes by choosing the male-dominated Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) as her senior high school track at Lapasan National High School in Cagayan de Oro City.

"Even if it's difficult, I chose SMAW because it offers higher chances of employment after graduation, especially abroad. So just in case I won't be able to go to college immediately, at least I'll have the skills to easily find a job," she said.

Like many of her classmates, Empuerto was born to a poor family. She lives with her parents and two siblings in a community of crowded wooden stilt houses over the Macajalar Bay, near the city's port area. The only way to their home is by a narrow path of wooden beams, some of which are loosely secured that one careless step could get you falling to the murky seawater below.

Her father earns just enough for the five of them to get through each day, by working as a carpenter. "Papa tells me to always think of my future so that I won't remain poor, without a job, and without a house of my own. I want to help my father so that he doesn't have to work anymore because he's getting old and work is becoming more difficult for him. I want to give back to him. That's why I have to study hard and look forward to a better future," she said.



SMAW is a technical course offered in some senior high schools in the country as part of the Philippines' shift to the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum.

Although she has all the motivation to excel in her studies, acquiring skills especially for a very technical course like SMAW requires a lot of hands-on training using various equipment which her school was lacking of. The students had to take turns using the only welding machine in the school and spent most of the time waiting instead of practicing what they've learned in the classroom.

Empuerto shared that when the examination for the National Certificate I (NCI) was drawing near, all of them were anxious and unsure of whether the practical training they had with limited equipment, was enough.

It was during this time when the Bayanihang Pampaaralan, through PBSP, provided her school with the much-needed machines. The second phase of the BP Consortium's initiative focuses on providing the interventions that will enable the government to produce competent and job-ready senior high school graduates who meet industry demands.

"When we were told that new welding machines and other tools will be donated to our school, we really jumped for joy! The machines came just in time. Thanks to them, we learned a lot of welding techniques and all of us were able to pass the NCI exam."

Empuerto and her classmates are just some of the students whose lives were changed for the better through PBSP's interventions in the education sector. With the continuous support of its member-companies and partners, more young Filipino dreamers and their families will be brought closer and closer to a life they truly deserve.

IRAH JANE EMPUERTO credits her impressive welding skills to the Bayanihang Pampaaralan which donated equipment to her school through PBSP.





Back in his younger years, **JIM WILKINS** used to stock the shelves of the grocery store where his father was working. Now, he leads the Philippine office of Fluor.

CHASING DREAMS

Fluor Philippines General Manager is in love with his job that he couldn't imagine doing anything else

Growing up in a small town in Louisiana in the United States, Jim Wilkins had a simple, laid-back lifestyle that included summer jobs in a grocery store where his dad worked.

In a place where everybody knew each other, Wilkins could have easily settled in his hometown and basked in the comfort of his family and friends. But he was in pursuit of something different – a dream that took him out of his comfort zone and into the world.

“When I was young, I had a toy crane where you could push buttons and it would drop or pick up little buildings I would make out of Legos. I was also interested in some of the big structures like bridges and the Louisiana Superdome, a domed sports stadium in New Orleans, near my hometown. It was one of the first and still is one of the largest domed stadiums ever built and I was fascinated by stories about its design and construction and followed them closely on the local news,” said Wilkins.

He chose to chase that dream, graduating with a Civil Engineering degree from Louisiana Tech University and going on to take a job as a structural engineer at Fluor in Houston, Texas.

At 23, Wilkins was so excited to work in his dream job that he didn't mind leaving his home in Louisiana and moving six hours away to Houston, or the fact that he didn't understand the complexities that came with it.

“It was all new to me, at first. You go to college and you learn how things work from a textbook perspective, how to do problems on paper. But when I started working, none of that stuff was there. There's no book that gives it all to you. I had to understand and learn all the complexities of what I was designing, what it was for, how it would be constructed, and how to make it work. I think when people talk about being an engineer, that's the dream. You think of something in your

Special Feature

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

For CHANGED Magazine's maiden issue this year, we are introducing this new section which features inspiring expatriate business and Corporate Social Responsibility leaders in the Philippines. In this issue, we present you Fluor Philippines' Jim Wilkins who is not only steering the company as its General Manager but also lives the lifestyle of helping others.

“*Fluor is my first job and I've been in the company for 28 years. I've stayed because it provides me with significant opportunities. I have changed roles, responsibilities and locations. So even though I am working with the same company, the challenges are very different and I enjoyed all that.***”**

mind to solve a problem or meet a need, you put it down on paper, the paper shows someone else how to build it and then you watch it being built. That's the cool part of engineering,” he said.

Wilkins was pleased to see many projects that he helped design come to life, including onshore and offshore facilities. He went on to have more opportunities to help the company execute projects including involvement in developing a global knowledge management system that had online search and forum discussions years before current systems or all its predecessors were in existence.

“When I was involved in our knowledge management deployment, part of my responsibility was to get people from Fluor offices around the world to work together and share experiences to help solve complex problems on our projects. At that time, people would typically use e-mail to exchange information but it was just an exchange between those people. And we still had 60,000 employees around the world who were not getting this needed information. So we came up with a system of how Fluor would manage its knowledge. It looked like Facebook where people would talk to each other, ask questions and get answers. It was a great opportunity because our team was able to convince people that knowledge sharing is power,” he said.

Wilkins went on to gain global experience in various Fluor offices in the U.S., Canada, Trinidad

and Tobago and the Philippines where he has responsibility for offices in Alabang and Cebu with a highly skilled workforce of 2,000. A major part of his job is mentoring good people to help them become successful.

“That's the trick in leadership, to get the right people into place and enable them to be successful. If they're successful, then I'm successful,” he said.

He adds that teaching school-aged children about engineering is also one of Fluor's corporate social responsibility advocacies that he strongly supports as it helps them understand at an early age the possibilities that engineering can offer to them as a career.

An active church leader in his hometown, Wilkins believes that strategic giving which focuses on long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes is the best way to give back to communities.

“Fluor is my first job and I've been in the company for 28 years. I've stayed because it provides me with significant opportunities. I have changed roles, responsibilities and locations. So even though I am working with the same company, the challenges are very different and I enjoyed all that,” he said.

And while at the helm of Fluor in the Philippines, Wilkins vows to make it even bigger, with the capacity to do stand-alone work and support projects anywhere in the world.

WHEN THE TEARS DRY UP

A person living with HIV who lost the ability to cry shares his story of rejection and how he bounced back

Crying is undeniably one of the most human things to do. Just like smiling, shedding tears is universally understood throughout the world and breaks any cultural barrier: it is a language of emotion that speaks to other people without words.

It may be an expression of distress or extreme happiness but regardless of its cause, crying feels good and without a doubt, having a good cry is as good as having a good laugh; it lifts up spirits, it unburdens.

So imagine how devastating it would be for someone to lose this precious ability? It may sound impossible but that's what exactly happened to 32-year-old Moses Ayuha who suffers from a damaged tear duct as a complication of him having HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).

After being diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) and HIV co-infection, his instinct was to call his family abroad for support, but the reaction he got was not what he was expecting.

He shared, "When I called them to tell my status, my family disowned me because they could not accept it and told me that I was a disgrace to the family. My mother even told me that they would be proud of me if I'll just die."

As a result of late diagnosis, the virus already weakened his body. Because he was living alone, Ayuha had to go to the hospital all by himself at a time when he could barely walk. To make matters worse, he had no family to rely on for assurance and affection, and had to face this life-threatening illness alone in a hospital bed. It was the most terrible thing that ever happened in his life.

Ayuha said, "There could be nothing more painful for an HIV positive than to be rejected by your family. From that day, I continue to contact them but they would not answer. There is a saying that goes, '*Walang magulang ang makakatiis sa anak*,' (No parent can resist his child) but there is, my mother."



MOSES AYUHA speaks in a talk show at the TB-HIV Collaborative Program Regional Launch organized by the Department of Health Region III held in 2015.

TAKING COURAGE

Beset with all these misfortunes, Ayuha couldn't even bring himself to cry to somehow ease what he was feeling. The tears won't fall as much as he wanted to. But instead of succumbing to sorrow and playing the victim, he took courage and fought the diseases.

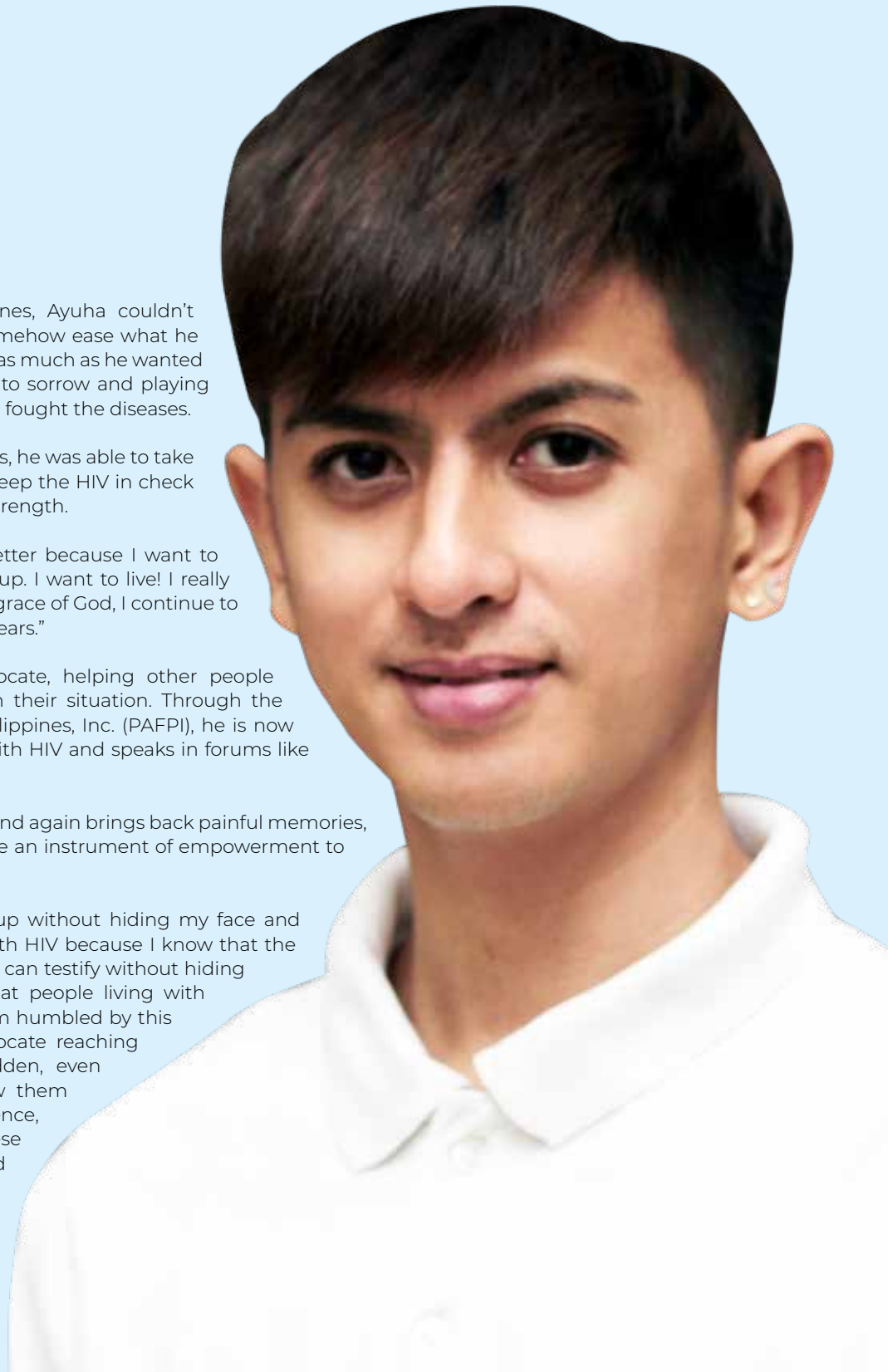
After being cured of tuberculosis, he was able to take anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) to keep the HIV in check and little by little regained his strength.

He said, "I was eager to get better because I want to live. If not, I would simply give up. I want to live! I really encouraged myself and by the grace of God, I continue to enjoy this second life for eight years."

Now, Ayuha is an active advocate, helping other people living with HIV to get through their situation. Through the Positive Action Foundation Philippines, Inc. (PAFPI), he is now an empowered person living with HIV and speaks in forums like those organized by PBSP.

Although telling his story time and again brings back painful memories, he is happy that he has become an instrument of empowerment to others.

"I have the courage to speak up without hiding my face and giving voice to people living with HIV because I know that the issue on HIV needs people who can testify without hiding their faces. I want to show that people living with HIV do not live in darkness. I am humbled by this responsibility of being an advocate reaching out to those who are bedridden, even feeding them. I want to show them that HIV is not a death sentence, that there is still life after all these things and I am grateful to God for giving me this opportunity," he said.



CHOOSING A BETTER LIFE

A mother of seven from Smokey Mountain
learns valuable lessons on family and child-rearing

16,

12, 10, 9, 4, 2 and 1 – These are not numbers in a Lotto ticket, but the ages of the children of 38-year-old Emalyn Paulino. While it is a joy to have a big family, for someone less fortunate like this mother of seven, life has certainly not been easy.

At four in the morning, while everyone else is in deep slumber, Paulino is already up and about, busy preparing for the long day ahead.

She starts preparing food for her eldest daughter so that when she leaves for school in the morning, everything is already in order. Before noon, she cooks lunch and attends to her other children who are going to school in the afternoon. Throughout the rest of the day, she tries to budget the meager but hard-earned pay given by her husband for their family's daily needs. But oftentimes, when her husband who works as a maintenance officer, couldn't give anything, they had to make do with whatever they have or sleep on their empty stomachs.

IN A DIRE SITUATION

Paulino gave birth to her first child at the age of 23, and then this was followed by another and another until she could no longer control the number of her children. She admitted on being initially skeptical about using any family planning method because she thought it was harmful to her health.

But their family further got themselves buried in poverty when more children were born. Without anyone to help her look after her children, Paulino had no choice but to stay at home to take care of them. She had to be strong for her family, even when they don't have a single peso in their pocket.

"Sobrang hirap. Maliit lang bahay namin, parang kwarto lang. Siyam kaming nakatira. Hindi na kami kasya kasi lumalaki na yung mga anak ko. May sira pa ang bahay namin. Tumutulo kapag umuulan (It's very hard. Our house is very small. It's just a room with nine people living in it. We can't fit anymore because our children are growing up. And when it rains, the water seeps inside the house)," lamented Paulino, a resident of Smokey Mountain in Tondo, Manila.

It was during her seventh pregnancy when she encountered complications that Paulino finally realized the need for family planning. At that time, she suffered from stomach aches and lost a lot of weight. Because she was pregnant, she couldn't take any medication and just had to endure the pain.

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Safe Motherhood Caravan of Intellicare and Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) opened Paulino's eyes to myths of pregnancy and the best practices of safe motherhood,

including family planning. The caravan aims to impart life-saving information to as many women of reproductive age as possible, and help reduce the number of maternal and infant mortality in the country.

During the caravan, Paulino learned so much about pre- and post-natal care, child-rearing, and family planning, including proper birth spacing to enable a mother to fully regain her health after pregnancy.

"Napakaimportante nitong caravan. Naturuan kami kung paano magiging magulang, paano maging nanay, pano magiging responsable sa anak, sa pamilya mo. Kung pano mapalaki mo sila (mga anak) ng maayos at mabigyan sila ng edukasyon. (This caravan is very important. We were taught on how to become responsible parents, how to be a mother, how to nurture your children, your family, and on how to raise your children properly and give them good education.)," she said.

Once filled with doubts, Paulino now encourages other people, especially young mothers in their community to try family planning. And for those mothers who have a lot of children, she hopes that they would not give up on taking care of them. Even when they don't have money and the situation gets hard, Paulino believes that every mother should always find a way to be there for their kids.



EMALYN PAULINO is a mother of seven and a participant of PBSP and Intellicare's Safe Motherhood Caravan in Smokey Mountain, Tondo, Manila.



ADELA ABEJO packs seafood snacks to be distributed to stores in Catbalogan City.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

From daycare worker, this fisherman's wife in Samar gets a 180-degree turn as top seller of squid chips

Twenty years ago, Adela Abejo used to think that her life would never change.

A fisherman's wife, her meager earnings as a daycare worker were just enough to make her family of seven eat three meals a day. Hence, earning a monthly income of Php1,000 was impossible.

But now at 70 years old, Abejo earns more than Php5,000 a month as the main supplier of squid chips in Catbalogan City – all thanks to a livelihood intervention she received from PBSP.

It was in 1997 when Abejo's life made a massive turn for the better. As part of its development mandate, PBSP sought to improve the communities' lives in Samar and chose the coastal barangay of Cabugawan, Catbalogan City as one its main beneficiaries. PBSP organized Abejo and some 30 neighbors as members of the Cabugawan Producers Association (former Cabugawan Multi-Purpose Cooperative) and conducted several capability building and leadership trainings as well as livelihood interventions to improve their lives.

One of the interventions introduced was the production of squid chips, a product Abejo had never heard of before. PBSP provided equipment to aid them in making and packaging their products. Aside from squid chips, PBSP taught the cooperative how to make other products from their coastal harvests such as shrimp and tahong (mussel) crackers.

"Before, our community just sold fish, seafood, and a few cooked snacks. We never knew that we can still transform our daily catch into new products that we can sell for a higher price, until PBSP came," she recalled.

BIG BREAK

After learning how to make new products, the cooperative's next challenge was to actually earn from them. With PBSP's assistance, the group was able to link with small barangay stalls that agreed to sell their products.

Their biggest break came in 2012, when Catbalogan City's Association of Samar Producers (ASAP) opened

a pasalubong (souvenir) center and included their products on display. From then, their income steadily grew, catering to both locals and tourists.

Their products also caught the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which further assisted their growth by providing shared service facilities meant to improve and diversify their products. The DTI assistance helped further boost their sales since they can now deliver more products at a faster rate.

Now, the cooperative has to produce an average of 100 kilos worth of squid chips and eight to 80 kilos of shrimp and tahong crackers just to meet the demand of their suppliers. Their squid chips also became famous from DTI-hosted trade fairs in Manila, Tacloban, and Cebu. They also got new clients from public utility vehicle terminals and other souvenir shops in Calbayog and Tacloban.

Additionally, Abejo as the top producer of squid chips in their cooperative, became the top seller of products in the pasalubong center at one point, earning Php108,000 from squid chips alone.

"I am very proud of our accomplishment, and I thank PBSP who made all this possible. If they did not help us, we would never reach this far," she said.

BETTER LIFE

From the cooperative's earnings, the group was able to repair their building which they plan to expand to accommodate their growing enterprise.

Because of the assistance, Abejo can better support her family, even sending her grandchildren to school. More importantly, the assistance and experience taught her to be business-savvy and confident in dealing with potential clients.

"What was very important from this experience is that we were able to give new jobs to people so it was not just the members who benefitted. Because of that, we have helped our community in some way. We taught more people that there are other, better ways to earn. And that is the most important lesson of all," she said.

WATER MEANS LIFE

For an Aeta community, quenching one's
thirst is like playing a game of chance with death

Access to water has made life incredibly easier and more convenient. From those four liters you use to flush your toilet, those few gallons you use in the kitchen, to the water you drink either from the tap or from bottles you buy at the convenience store, water is indeed an important resource.

Because of its easy access in the cities, people sometimes tend to forget that the reason we are able to live this close to one another and expand our cities is because we made running water available.

But for remote communities which lack the luxuries synonymous to city dwelling, water access is a matter of life and death. The Aeta community of Sito San Martin in Bamban, Tarlac has been used to fetching water from an open well for drinking, and from a river for domestic use, all their lives.

"We fetch water from a well but we don't really know if it's fit for drinking since we are not sure if it has been polluted by animal droppings. That is why people here, especially children, get diarrhea frequently. Many even die from it," shared 28-year-old Rose Ann Tolentino.

But the 350 families of the village have no choice but to drink water from the well, unaware of the possibility that they might be drinking poison.

What's worse is that the journey to these water sources is a steep downhill trek that takes half an hour and another hour climbing back to the village. Each person could only carry a bucket of water uphill which is barely enough for cooking and drinking.

Tolentino said, "Going downhill is hard but carrying a bucket up the slope is even more difficult, so some would just endure not drinking when the water they fetched for the day runs out. The only time we get water without going down to the river is when it rains. We collect rainwater for cooking and drinking but that's not always the case. That's why we really value every drop of water, regardless if it is clear or cloudy."

To avoid the heat of the sun, the Aetas would go down very early. On certain days however, they would stay

down the hill until the next day. It's when they would bring all the dirty clothes – and the dishes from the previous day – down the river so that they don't have to take the grueling trek back and forth just to fetch enough water for the chore.

Laundry is a community activity. They would bring rice and cook it inside bamboos, the same jungle survival technique that the Aetas used to teach to American soldiers. The men of the village would also come to catch fish. They would camp there for the night so that when go back to their houses, all the clothes will be dry and lighter to carry uphill as compared to being wet.

This has always been the situation for the Aeta community. For Tolentino, this has been her plight since she was eight and until now that she has her own family. She joins her 65-year-old grandmother Aida in praying that someday, their dire condition would change.

And it seems that their prayers were not in vain.

Recently, PBSP and its member-company International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI) installed a potable water system in the community with 50 faucets spread throughout the village. The system comes with a chlorinator so that the people will no longer have to worry about getting water-borne diseases.

"I can now easily bathe my five-year-old son Jimboy, in the morning before he goes to school and when he arrives, lunch will be ready. I didn't get to do that before when there wasn't running water outside our house. We never had anything like this for the whole community. We are really thankful to the donors for giving us water supply," Tolentino said.

Thanks to the water system, the irony of losing one's life just by drinking what's supposed to be life-giving water will no longer happen in the community. Tolentino is happy that her difficulties in fetching water will no longer be experienced by her son, and that finally, the Aetas have the water access they need and deserve.



ROSE ANN TOLENTINO and her son, **JIMBOY**, are beneficiaries of the potable water system installed by PBSP and International Container Terminal Services, Inc.

SWEEPING BAD HABITS

A community leader from Taguig brings behavioral change to fight environmental problems

Tons of garbage used to pile up in a community in South Daanghari, Taguig City. Despite reminders and constant clean-up drives by the Barangay Health Workers (BHW), the place seemed hopeless as residents continued to throw their garbage anywhere they want.

Thanks to a revolutionary project which began a few months back, there came a drastic change in the scenery, and more importantly, the behavior of the residents. Instead of picking up the plastic wastes thrown by the residents, BHW president Rosemarie Tayoni is now weighing the collected pieces of plastic that the members of the community dutifully collect every week.

A CLEANER COMMUNITY

Tayoni admitted that she herself was initially indifferent towards the garbage problem in her community. In fact, there were times when she contributed to the illegal disposal of wastes. Despite her participation in clean-up drives, she would also be a part of those who throw plastic wastes indiscriminately. In her home, she also didn't practice waste segregation. Hence, her trash is a mixture of biodegradable and recyclable wastes.

The change in the community happened when the Misis Walastik program of Unilever Philippines, Inc. (Unilever), in partnership with Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), was implemented in their barangay. The solid waste recovery project aims to recycle the collected plastic wastes into highly usable things such as chairs and cement blocks. The residents just had to collect their plastic wastes, and turn it over to their BHWs. For every kilo of plastic they've collected, they will get an incentive from Unilever.

At first, only a few residents joined in the collection of plastic wastes as many were skeptical about the project. To win them over, Tayoni went beyond her task of weighing the collected plastics, and encouraged these residents about the advantages of the program. When most of them joined in the initiative, the changes were immediately felt.

"Truly, you can see the cleanliness in our barangay. Instead of just throwing their plastics around, we are now collecting it. We also



get to save some money because instead of buying products (such as laundry detergents, fabric conditioners, etc.), it is given to us depending on how much plastic we've collected,"Tayoni said.

The 66-year-old mother of two also saw a big change in her own household. Before, her trash cans would overflow because of the amount of waste her family throws away. But ever since she started participating in Misis Walastik, her husband and children helped her make their home tidier than ever.

"I'm proud of how this program changed my attitude towards the environment. I became more conscious of the trash around and I learned how to segregate. I'm also pleased to say that I became more disciplined, as well as the people around me. I hope that more people will learn proper waste segregation and will also be able to control their behavior of throwing trash anywhere. It is only through proper discipline that our streets will become trash-free," Tayoni said.

ROSEMARIE TAYONI, a Barangay Health Worker, leads her community in saving the environment by practicing proper solid waste disposal and segregation.



LIVING LEGACY

A PBSP-trained retired teacher continues to make waves and improve communities in Samar

In the development sector, Melbourga “Meling” Corregidor is a well-loved, accomplished NGO leader whose acclaimed reputation comes from a rich body of work.

Even at 88 years old and with various projects already under her helm, she continues to be actively involved in her causes. She is still – upon incessant request – the treasurer of the Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET).

She has also been a consistent guest speaker of other NGOs during national conventions. With her age comes a wisdom borne out of years of rigid, passionate social work – all thanks to the organization that molded her into who she is now.

“You know, PBSP did so much for me. I owe so much to PBSP because without them, I would be nothing. That is why even if I am elated to be given such high regard, I always stress that I am just doing my work as what I am taught. And I really just enjoyed my community work,” said Corregidor, the former Executive Director of both the Northern Samar Integrated Rural Development Foundation (NOSIRDEF) and Federation of Northern Samar NGOs (FENGO).

Through these organizations and the support provided by PBSP, she was able to uplift many lives.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Corregidor was a retired teacher at 60 when PBSP gave her the opportunity to transform lives. Samar was in political and economic turmoil, and PBSP sought to improve the situation through several interventions jointly implemented by people’s organizations (POs). To continue their work, PBSP built local leaders within a pool of officers from their assisted POs. PBSP consolidated the groups, gave them trainings, and turned over the projects for them to continue and sustain.

Through these trainings, Corregidor learned that the real goal of development is to “help people help themselves.” Based on her experience, she believes the solution for poverty reduction in Samar is to give farmers their own land to live in and plant.

Using the skills she learned, she built two mini-communities. One is in Brgy. Old Rizal in Catarman where she helped provide permanent homes for informal settlers who used to live along the coastlines. Corregidor convinced her friend to donate a parcel of land for the settlers and persuaded the town mayor to support the initiative. Following PBSP’s lessons, she organized the residents into a multi-purpose cooperative, taught them how to grow and sell crops, and linked them to possible markets. Now, the community owns 3.5 hectares and even donated 480 square meters for the construction of a multi-purpose building from the Angelo King Foundation.

“*Sometimes, I would ask myself why I continue doing this. But immediately, I would say, ‘You are still here because your mission is not over.’ And why stop? PBSP trained me in spite of my old age.***”**

In the second community, Corregidor who was then chairman of FENGO was able to secure millions of funds from former President Fidel Ramos for their sustainability projects. They loaned a portion of it to several NGOs and POs for their own projects while the rest of the money was spent to secure 10 hectares of land for their farm in Brgy. Bugko in Mondragon, Samar. With the help of KALAH-CIDSS, she was able to scale up the project by providing household toilets for 15 informal settlers. The farmers, on other hand, could now harvest more than 15 sacks of cassava and sweet potatoes every month, which they sell to earn income.

“In Old Rizal, I told the mayor who was my student, ‘Did I not teach you to have good manners?’ So he supported the project. Now these informal settlers have their own land, plaza, and multi-purpose building. These communities are finally free from the bondage of squatting, and they can live in better conditions,” she added.

PROVING HER WORTH

For Corregidor, her mission extends even in her personal capacity. One time, she visited an NPA-identified community and saw children using rafts to go to school. Recognizing the safety risks, she collaborated with the Department of Education and Department of Public Works and Highways in building an elementary school for the kids.

Armed with such passion and vigor, Corregidor to this day still visits her communities. In her last visit in Old Rizal, for instance, she found out that the president of their association who used to be a fish vendor, is now the chairman of the barangay.

In between these professional and personal experiences, she involved insurgents in helping bring development to their places, negotiated with people manning the checkpoints, and even dealt with stubborn officials – all so she could create a better future for these communities.

“Sometimes, I would ask myself why I continue doing this. But immediately, I would say, ‘You are still here because your mission is not over.’ And why stop? PBSP trained me in spite of my old age – that is how much the foundation trusted me.



MELBOURGA CORREGIDOR proves that even at retirement, you can still do so much for others.

It is just natural that I continue to prove my worth. So I still do whatever I can, as long as I am able. If my work is done, when my communities don't need me anymore, then I can finally say I can die peacefully,” she said.

STATE OF DONATIONS

AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2017

First mission: June 14-16
Second mission: July 8-10
Third mission: Sept 13-15
Fourth mission: Oct 6-8

SITES

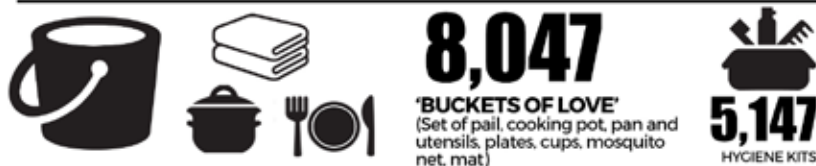
Marawi City
Balo-i, Lanao Del Norte
Saguilaran, Lanao Del Sur
Iligan City
Pantar, Lanao del Norte



Gifts that support basic needs



Gifts that help families help home-based evacuees



Gifts that uplift the spirit



* 4196 Teachers and 569 Volunteers received a set

Gifts to help in evacuees' early recovery



SUPPORT OUR MARAWI INITIATIVES!

GIVE A GIFT OF CHANGE FOR MARAWI!



FAMILY RECOVERY PACKAGE Php 50,000 By buying this, you will help address the immediate needs of affected families.

The package includes the following interventions:



FOOD SECURITY

FAITH Gardening - Php 4,500

The "Food Always in the Home (FAITH) Gardening Package will augment a family's food needs while starting to rebuild their livelihood. It includes garden tools and materials, vegetable seeds, garden soil, and vermicompost.



NON-FOOD ITEMS

Home Kit - Php 3,600

Families who lost everything during the war will be able to start anew with a Welcome Home Kit which contains cooking and dining essentials such as a cooking pot, frying pan, wok, bowls, plates, spoons, utensils, cups, table and kitchen knives, and wooden ladle. The package also includes a blanket, pail, bucket, and a hygiene kit.



ECONOMIC REVIVAL

Sulong Kabuhayan - Php 22,000

Micro-entrepreneurs who lost their businesses will be able to revive it or start new ventures through the Family Business Financial Assistance Package. This will be in the form of a zero-interest loan that they can use as seed capital for their business.



WATER SECURITY

Water Purifier - Php 3,500

Through a Water Kit, one family will gain access to safe drinking water, either from a household water filter system or bottled water, depending on the needs of the beneficiaries. They will also be given water containers (jerry cans/water cisterns).



EDUCATION AND NUTRITION

Student Kit - Php 16,400

Each student starter kit will provide three students in a family with T-shirts, slippers, sling bags and umbrellas as well as 120 days of supplemental feeding to address their nutritional needs.

LET US HELP FAMILIES REBUILD THEIR LIVES!

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