

MGA KWENTO NG

PagSibol

Sunsets & Sunrises in Boracay



SPECIAL EDITION



on the Phase I – Sustainable Livelihood Program for rehabilitation efforts on displaced workers of the Boracay-closure



DSWD

Department of Social Welfare and Development



SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOOD
PROGRAM

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About the Cover

"Para sa Paraiso"



What does it take to rebuild a paradise?

May we always remember that sunsets are there to remind us that after the pains and struggles of an entire day, there is always something to look forward to as it ends.

In this special edition of Mga Kwento ng PagSibol, let us sail the waves, once more, and feel the warmth of a new sun waiting to rise.

Witness how the Boracay-closure opened opportunities, brand new perspectives, and a more proactive outlook on life.



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FOREWORD

There was trouble in paradise.

For at least six months in 2018, the sunsets seemed longer in Boracay.

The nights were quieter, and unfortunately, there was also a definite hush looming among the once “booming” enterprises and livelihoods in and around the island and its surrounding areas, including mainland Malay.

When the Government decided to subject Boracay for environmental rehabilitation, which led to its closure in April 2018 until its ‘reopening’ and completion in October 2018, all good intentions were poured out to actually save the “cesspool”, as tagged by Pres. Rodrigo Duterte, that the island came to be. However, while the paradise island takes its well-deserved rest, the people of Malay became restless.

It may be hard to digest, at a glance, that before the commencement of the Boracay rehabilitation efforts, local vendors and small-time businessmen managed to gain as much as, or at least, Php 18,000.00 in less than a month, especially during peak seasons, to less than minimum or nothing at all. Hence, the outcry of the displaced workers and/or islanders for alternative livelihood opportunities and capital assistance, mindful that the biggest economic contributor of Boracay really depended on the all-year-round influx of local and foreign tourists.

Eventually, the issue did not only focus on the rehabilitation-closure of an island, but also the cessation of some thriving livelihoods which affected at least 10,596 families/ individuals (based on reports from DSWD Field Office VI). Mindful of the socio-economic challenges, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) exhausted its resources, in partnership with different agencies and institutions, to provide support and various forms of assistance in the context of livelihood. Herculean feat as it may seem, the DSWD SLP interventions came to fruition, through the steadfast and courageous efforts of DSWD Field Office VI as main implementer of the SLP Boracay-Rehabilitation projects benefitting thousands of displaced workers.

As SLP continues to monitor how the affected families and individuals cope up with their “economic loss”, proactive measures were also done to focus more on the gains of the program participants. The succeeding stories do not only emphasize the contribution of DSWD SLP, more so, the stories of change and growth prove that the sun rises again, and will continue to do so, in paradise.



MGA KWENTO NG PagSibol

The Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) aligns its communication strategy to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and focuses on affirming the growth of SLP participant's capabilities and bridging livelihood opportunities towards inclusive economic development.

To further celebrate the early wins and the big impact of SLP in the lives of our program participants, the "Mga Kwento ng PagSibol" (MKP) creates an enabling and empowering platform so as to spark up the hope that the marginalized and vulnerable sectors do have a great chance in life. From humble beginnings to rewarding transformations.

'Mula sa PagSibol hanggang sa PagSulong'

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Stories of Change & Growth



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A close-up portrait of Emma, a woman with short, grey hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black t-shirt and has a brown strap over her shoulder. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be the interior of her sari-sari store.

SARI-SARI STORES

Sari-Sari Stories

Emma smiles for the camera inside her made-shift sari-sari store located a few kilometers away from Caticlan Jetty Port

**Sari-Sari is a popular local term which means 'variety'*

Sari-Sari Stores are a common sight to any community. With every store comes a different story, and Emma Bangcaya, 61, a local of Malay, Aklan, shared hers with a smile framing every wrinkle on her face.

Emma started providing for her family through a small eatery which was strategically situated a stone-throw away from Malay-Caticlan's jetty-port. On a daily basis, she manages to gain a fair amount of income enough to sustain the needs of her family. Every day was usually a busy day for Emma until the Boracay-closure took its toll- this eventually led her to close the eatery due to huge decrease of hungry tummies waiting for transit to the island through the jetty-port.

With the help of the seed capital assistance worth Php 15,000.00 provided through SLP, Emma thought of alternative ways to make both ends meet.

With enough amount and inspiration, she tried putting up a small sari-sari store in the hopes that it would add up to her husband's daily income from driving a tricycle. As the profit of the small store rolled, Emma also came up with the idea to raise hogs and even weave straw mats.

Admittedly, Emma narrated that her income was still incomparable to that of her eatery, although she keeps her spirits high that with the completion of the Boracay-closure, she might be able to bounce back and restart her eatery business, as an additional source of income.

On the other hand, Analie Capispisan, 38, looked at her sari-sari store with more potential. She shared that at present, she usually gains around Php 1,000.00 – Php 2,000.00 on a daily basis, which was very close to her husband's income from his day-to-day Paraw (a local term for sailboat) services.



Analie added that with that much of daily income, she was able to easily expand to other ventures which include hog fattening and free-range chicken raising. As a beneficiary of the Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program, Analie manages to provide for her three (3) children, not mentioning at least a hundred heads of free-range chicken as well.

“

Malaki ang naitulong ng SLP kasi siyempre, nagkaroon talaga ng panahon na ang hirap kumita. Pero dahil sa natanggap namin na kapital, naging maayos paunti-unti ang takbo ng kabuhayan namin ”

“SLP played an important role in our lives especially during the hard times. Through the seed capital assistance, we were able to gradually get back on track on our livelihood”

- Analie Capispisan



Analie stands by the facade of her sari-sari store which is located beside her house in Malay, Aklan



Analie feeds her free range chickens in their compound in Napaan, Malay, Aklan

When it comes to variety, Arnel Torento, 52, maximized his resources to achieve a more viable means of livelihood. Starting off as an officer of the Malay Aklan Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (MATODA) Transport Multi-Purpose Cooperative and as a tricycle driver himself, Arnel felt the impact of the Boracay-closure. Before, he usually gets more profit through his transport services, mindful of the high-foot traffic of tourists in need of ways to move in and around Malay.

However, the circumstances never stopped his engines, instead, he made use of the seed capital assistance provided by SLP to put up his own agri-vet supplies, rice retail, and other general merchandise to keep up with the pace of the gear shifts.

Arnel shared with conviction when asked about his experiences as a result of the closure. While Arnel handles his line of businesses well, he still maintains to be a responsible officer of MATODA. As a matter of fact, the association is gearing towards the completion of construction of their very own office building. It may also be noted that majority of the MATODA members had also received seed capital assistance from SLP which they used for the repair and maintenance of their tricycle units, some amount was spared for other microenterprises as well.



“

Iba na ngayon. Hindi tulad dati na pwede ka basta-basta pumasok sa Boracay, ngayon hindi. Kung may 100%, parang halos 70% agad ang naramdaman namin na bawas sa daily income namin simula nung closure ”

"Things are different now. Unlike before when it was really easy to come in and out of Boracay. If there is a 100% income, it seemed like there was really at least 70% decrease, since the start of the closure"

- Arnel Torente

When asked on his and the MATODA's plans should they receive additional seed capital assistance in line with the target Phase II of SLP Boracay-closure rehabilitation efforts, Arnel said that they are planning for their own gasoline station and acquire other assets for the association for future project expansions.

"Dati kumikita kami ng malaki dahil sa Boracay, pero ang natutunan namin ngayon, dapat meron ka talagang preparation. Hindi sa lahat ng oras nandiyan ang mga businesses sa Boracay. At least kung nakapaghandang ka ng maayos, nakapag-apon ka, kahit wala ang Boracay, may magagawa ka pa rin at kakayanin mo pa rin kumita ng sapat"

"We really managed to gain huge earnings before the Boracay-closure. However, there is a lesson to be learned. We really have to be prepared for any circumstances. We have to keep in mind that the businesses in Boracay may not also be there, that is why, we always have to be prepared. We should save more so that we can become more resilient and earn enough for our family's needs"



Arnel scoops a kilo of rice as he tends to a customer in his retail store



Arnel, together with his MATODA co-officer, flaunt their nearly finished two-storey association building in mainland Malay, Aklan



Arnel balances his time for manning his store and driving his tricycle

The "Sari-Sari" stories of Emma, Analie, and Arnel go beyond the four walls of their mini-stores. In fact, they were able to learn how to diversify their livelihood to optimize their entrepreneurial skills and potentials through the help of the SLP seed capital assistance. Leny, on the other hand, decided to get her hands wet and scale up for a good catch. 🌱



Leny Billobos and her husband show their fishing nets and boat, acquired through the SLP seed capital assistance

'Net' Income



Originally from Masbate, Leny Billobos, 54, decided to settle in Malay, Aklan with her husband, a skilled fisherman. With the number of potential fish markets and niches in and around Boracay, Leny braved the waves and ventured to fish vending and processing.

With a previous regular income of at least Php 1,000.00 to Php 2,000.00, the Boracay-closure gave an all-time low of around Php 400.00 – Php 500.00 for Leny and her family. In the brink of giving up, Leny regained confidence when she learned about the SLP and how she may be able to avail of the seed capital assistance so that she may be able to redeem from the massive loss in term of income of the family.

With the seed capital fund from SLP, Leny and her family tried to undertake other types of businesses which included hog raising/ fattening. Afterwards, she used the proceeds from her hog raising/ fattening project to buy raw materials for fishing net production and repair/ acquisition of fishing boats- still not losing heart of sustaining a fishing enterprise despite their experiences during the closure period.

Now that Boracay returned back to its normal, though more regulated, business transactions, Leny and her family now has two sets of full-sized fishing nets, two motorized fishing boats, and a stronger fighting spirit.



“

Kaunti na lang ang bumibili sa amin simula nang nagsarado ang Boracay. Buti na lang natulungan kami ng SLP para makagawa ng ibang paraan at magkaroon ng kamalayan kung ano pa ang pwede namin na maging kabuhayan ”

“The demands for fresh fish became very scarce. Luckily, SLP came and helped us by providing financial and technical assistance which led us to be more conscious of other livelihood opportunities which we can take part of”

- Leny Billobos



Leny owns two fishing boats which they use for fishing. Both of which were acquired through the help of the SLP seed capital assistance

Apart from Leny's mentioned alternative livelihoods, she also took the chance to serve as cargo checker for their association: Boracay Land and Sea Port Boat Transport Association Inc. (BORALAND). The latter, duly registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) since March 2006, is one of the eligible recipients of the Phase II SLP Boracay rehabilitation-projects.

BORALAND, with at least sixty-four (64) members who have availed seed capital assistance from SLP, is headed by Ponciano Tayco, 43. Even as an established cooperative, BORALAND had its fair share of challenges brought by the closure. Ponciano recalled how drastic the decrease in the number of tourist passengers were during the closure period.

“Hindi naman kami total stop operations. Yung ibang mga kooperatiba na kagaya namin, talagang napilitan magsara. Pero naramdaman talaga namin ang epekto. Wala pang kalahati sa normal na dami ng pasahero ang natira noong nagsarado ang Boracay. Meron kaming dalawampu't dalawa (22) units ng motorized boats dati, pero dahil nga hindi masyadong praktikal ang bumiyahe, labing-isa (11) lang ang pinapatakbo namin. Kaya yung ibang miyembro namin, napilitan na magtrabaho bilang construction workers”

“We did not totally stop our operations. Although, other cooperatives like us were forced to do so. We really felt the negative impact of the Boracay-closure. The number of regular passengers did not even reach at least half of what was expected. We had twenty-two (22) units of motorized boats, but because it was impractical to mobilize all of it, we just ran on eleven (11) units. That's why some of our members resorted to work as construction workers instead”

Ponciano also mentioned that through SLP, majority of their association's members were able to try out other microenterprises such as hog raising and meat processing. This particular experience made them realize their future plans as an association. Accordingly, they are currently planning to test their potentials and skills on swine/ hog raising which shall involve massive production and even meat processing activities.





Ponciano Tayco passionately narrates their experiences during the Boracay-closure and how they were able to cope up through SLP

“

Na-realized namin na mas magandang magkaroon ng negosyo na hindi basta-basta maaapektuhan kung magsasarado ulit ang Boracay. Kaya gusto namin ng livestock kasi at least medyo matatag, hindi tulad ng pagbabangka, kasi pag may bagyo bawal maglayag

”

"We realized that we have to think outside the box and plan for a more resilient business venture.

This particular challenge led us to consider livestock production or animal raising. Unlike being boatmen, our chosen enterprise may not be easily halted by bad weather"

- Ponciano Tayco

When it comes to resilience, Luz proves that with more than a decade of sustainable business operations, she has the secret recipe. 🌱

GOOD

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

“

Noong nagsara ang Boracay, nawalan kami ng hanap-buhay sa loob ng anim (6) na buwan. Walang customer na araw-araw na kumakain, pati ang mga miyembro namin, nalubog sa utang

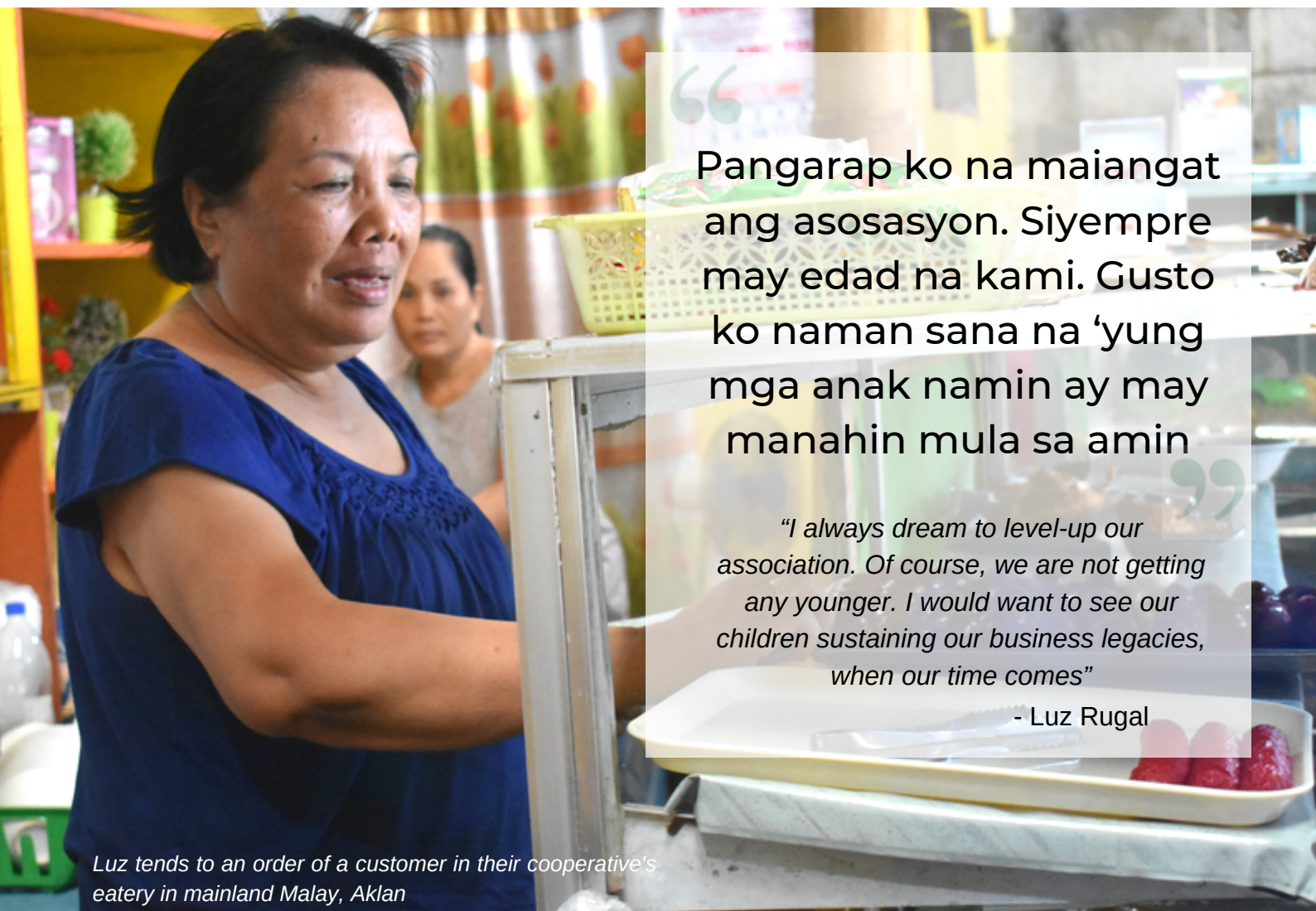
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"During the closure season, we lost our main source of income that went on for six (6) months. We had no regular customers who usually eat in our restaurant every day. The sad part, our members were submerged in debt"

- Luz Rugal

You would usually see Luz Rugal, 62, at the counter table of her *carinderia* serving out dishes of well-done viands and other local delicacies. This has been Luz's routine until there were fewer mouths to feed during the Boracay-closure.





Luz tends to an order of a customer in their cooperative's eatery in mainland Malay, Aklan

Pangarap ko na maiangat ang asosasyon. Siyempre may edad na kami. Gusto ko naman sana na 'yung mga anak namin ay may manahin mula sa amin

"I always dream to level-up our association. Of course, we are not getting any younger. I would want to see our children sustaining our business legacies, when our time comes"

- Luz Rugal

Through SLP's seed capital assistance, a total of twelve (12) association members from CPV-MPC were able to venture into other lines of businesses such as but not limited to coco lumber production, hog raising, sari-sari stores, among others.

However, it is worthy to note that all participants contributed and shared a portion of their seed capital for the operationalization of their new pasalubong center. It may be hard to understand why the association even thought of putting up a pasalubong center when in fact, there was even a drastic decrease in the number of tourist arrivals. When asked about this, Luz answered,

"May alternative market. Araw-araw may barko na nadaong. May mga biyahero pa rin naman kahit walang turista. Ang maganda kasi dito, yung isa

namin na member ay may pwesto na rin talaga sa port. Kaya naisip namin na posible pa rin na magandang pagkakitaan ang mga pasalubong"

"There is an alternative market. Passenger and cargo ships usually carry a bounty of travelers amidst the decreased number of tourists. The good thing about this type of business is that one of our members has an existing spot within the port's vicinity. This is one of the reasons why we thought of pursuing a pasalubong center"

Despite her ripe age, Luz coped up with the foregoing challenges, with rigor and vigor - inspiring her members, she also came to realize how collective efforts could expound boundaries and test possibilities. 🌱





Azucena proudly shows-off her fruit stand filled with a good bunch of lanzones and bananas

Carts & Stands

You can't call an island a paradise without locally available and tropical fruits.

Luckily for Boracay, they have Azucena Panagsagan, 66-the bearer of fresh fruits for almost twenty (20) years. It is very easy to spot Azucena. One just has to stride along Boracay's main road and look for an old lady with a very youthful smile.

Azucena usually puts her fresh fruits on a vibrant display, attracting the locals and foreign tourists alike. This particular scenario came back to life a few months ago when the island paradise reopened its doors. After receiving the seed capital assistance from SLP, Azucena never hesitated to put everything for the expansion of her product selections. Starting with bananas, she now has a plethora of dragon fruits, apples, marang, lanzones

rambutan, and a local variety of mangoes. She recalls how she struggled to sustain her daily needs as she relied solely on local buyers in the neighborhood.

As she recalls her experiences, she affirms the beauty that the closure has brought, leaving a sense of challenge for future development efforts.

"Hindi naman puro negatibo ang naging epekto ng pagsasara ng isla. Sa totoo nga, mas marami ang magagandang epekto nito sa kapaligiran. Pwede naman na magkaroon ng pagsulong na hindi maaapektuhan ang mga taga rito mismo, 'di ba?"





Azucena sells her fresh fruits along the mainstreet of Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan

“

Hindi naman puro negatibo ang naging epekto ng pagsasara ng isla. Sa totoo nga, mas marami ang magagandang epekto nito sa kapaligiran. Pwede naman na magkaroon ng pagsulong na hindi maaapektuhan ang mga taga rito mismo, 'di ba?

”

“The closure of the island actually has more positive points than negative effects. One thing is that it really gave nature a chance to rehabilitate and recover. We can always look forward to development without compromising the lives of the people, right?”

- Azucena Panagsagan

As she finishes her story, Azucena arranged her fruits and tended to a customer. While she hands over a sold bunch of bananas, Catherine, on the other hand carefully wraps up and cooks her turons (sliced banana wraps), a few kilometers away from Azucena's spot.

Catherine Garcia, 44, owns a food vending/ food cart business located in and between commercial centers in Boracay.

Since 2013, she goes on preparing her merienda delights, usually deep fried bananas, at 2:00pm on a regular basis, and usually sells out all her goods at 6:00pm. Before the closure began, she manages to gain a gross income of Php 800.00 to Php 1,000.00 within only four (4) hours of hard-work on a daily basis.

However, upon the commencement of the closure, Catherine was thankful that through the seed capital assistance of SLP, she was able to add more types of merienda on her menu. From deep fried bananas, she tried serving kwek-kwek (deep fried quail eggs) and other kakanin (rice and cassava puddings) such as bilo-bilo and carioaca. This boosted her income to at least Php 1,500.00 upon reopening of Boracay.



Catherine cooks another batch of deep fried bananas, in time for merienda in Boracay island

“

Maraming salamat talaga sa SLP. Kung wala 'yun, ewan ko lang kung buhay pa kami ngayon. 'Yung binigay na seed capital assistance, pinaikot-ikot ko, kaya hanggang ngayon talagang nakakatulong pa rin

”

“Thanks a lot to SLP. We don't even know if we would still make it out alive without SLP's help. I have learned to manage to seed capital assistance and rolled it over so that it sustains what we have started”

- Catherine Garcia



Now that she has mastered her recipes, she slowly found her way to earn up to a gross of Php 3,000.00 a day. Not only did she learn how to expand her business, Catherine also appreciated and applied more effective savings generation practices, owing from her experiences during the closure.

While Azucena and Catherine stay in a single spot as part of their daily business routine, the enthusiastic members of MABOVEN see to it that they keep their feet always on-the-go as they storm the beachfronts to cater to their target markets. 🌱



Catherine patiently waits for her regular customers who take fancy in her fried quailed eggs, banana wraps, and other snacks

MABOVEN MOVEMENT

For over thirty (30) years, the Malay Boracay Vendors, Peddlers, Masseurs, Manicurists Association Inc. (MABOVEN) has been on the move to give anyone who has ever been to Boracay, that “beachy” tropical paradise since most, if not all, of the business lines of MABOVEN focused on microenterprises which are usually transacted or availed along the beach fronts of the island.

It is easy to tell if you’ve been to Boracay. You’d usually have your hair strands tightly braided, bought out a handful of souvenirs, and experienced a legit full-body massage while lying on the warm white sand. These are MABOVEN’s trademark, and they’ve been doing it for a long time. This is particularly the reason why the members of the MABOVEN had been really emotional when the Boracay closure happened.





Rhea offers her foot massage - reflexology services within the allowable location for vendors, a few meters away from the beachfront in Boracay



Daniel happily braids the hair strands of a local tourist in Boracay island

Rhea Balandra, 41; Daniel Prado, 30; and Arvie Gelito, 44 passionately shared their stories of coping and redemption. The common thing about Rhea, Daniel, and Arvie is that they've been working as massage therapist, hair-braider, and necklace vendor, respectively, solely to support the needs of their children and/or siblings who are currently studying for a brighter future.

With the stricter implementation and reinforcement of the "25 + 5 meters" policy which pertains to clearance of any economic activity (e.g. selling, services, etc) within 30 meters away from the beachfront, the MABOVEN's once brisk movement came to a halt. This basically means less chance of getting in contact with their beach-goers customers and a total close-down of their business operations during the six (6) months closure.

Rhea, working as a massage therapist and a part-time manicurist, thought-out loudly as she expressed,

"Para sa akin, mas maganda talaga na doon kami sa beach na naglalako ng mga produkto at serbisyo namin, kasi mas nasusuportahan ko yung tatlong (3) anak ko na nasa college pa noon. Dati-rati, nakapagpagawa pa ako ng bahay, nakabili ako ng tricycle. Ang laki talaga ng tulong noong doon pa kami sa beach pinapagayagan"



Arvie shows craftly done seashell necklaces and woven ladies' bags, being sold in her small stall in Boracay island



With the enforcement of the "25+5" meters policy from the main shore of the beach, vendors are provided with clear guidance on allowable areas to sell their goods and offer their services

"In my opinion, being able to peddle and offer our products and services along the whole stretch of the beach was more advantageous, especially that it supported the education of my three (3) children who were, at that time, still in college. Before, I was able to have my house built/ repaired. I was able to acquire our own tricycle. It was really a big boost, being able and allowed to do business along the beachfront"

While it is true that Rhea has expressed her dismay about the regulation, she still believes and trusts the purpose of the said policy, especially appreciating that the said regulation applies to all and no one is getting special favors. Moreover, she also mentioned that the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Malay has been very responsive to their needs and requests, providing the MABOVEN with their own location, just a few meters away from the "30 meter-border" of the beachfront.

On the other hand, Daniel comes out as the breadwinner of his family back in Antique, and also the "braid"-winner of the MABOVEN. With two (2) siblings still in college, he never grew tired of exhausting all legal and appropriate ways to earn so that he may be able to send enough money to sustain his family's needs. Daniel recalled how the news of the impending Boracay closure shocked everyone, being unmindful that the said closure pronouncement was indeed serious and urgent.

“

Noong nag-declare ang pangulo, nagulat ako, nabigla. Paano na 'yung mga kapatid ko? Tapos 'yung lola ko at si nanay. Wala na akong tatay. Lahat sila sa akin umaasa. Kasi pag nagsarado ang Boracay, ano na lang ipapadala ko sa kanila sa Antique? Pero buti na lang, hindi naman nagpabaya ang Gobyerno – lalo na ang DSWD at SLP”

”

"When the president declared for the rehabilitation closure of Boracay, we were all shocked, surprised. The first thing that I thought of is the welfare of my siblings, my grandmother, mother. I have no one else to turn to. They all depended on me. If Boracay closes, how would I earn and send money to Antique? Thankfully, the Government did not leave us in vain- especially DSWD and SLP"

- Daniel Prado

As Daniel elaborates the interventions provided by DSWD, he mentioned that aside from the seed capital assistance that SLP provided, one of the most helpful projects provided was the cash-for-work that ran for six (6) months, basically covering the entire duration of the closure. Arvie agreed and added how the said cash-for-work did them well.

"Naglinis kami ng isla. Tulong-tulong kami dahil ito lang yung pwede namin gawin sa loob ng mga panahon na wala pa talagang turista. Mabuti na lang at may cash-for-work din kasi 'yung kinita namin mula dito, ginamit namin para paghandaan ang muling pagbubukas ng Boracay. Kaya habang may closure, nabigyan rin namin ng pagkakataon ang sarili namin para maghanda at magdagdag ng stocks"

"We did coastal and island clean-up. Everyone worked together. This was the only alternative income that we could get, in the absence of tourist arrivals. The cash-for-work project was really helpful and the gains we got from this, we used to prepare for the reopening of Boracay. During the closure season, we gave ourselves the chance to prepare and replenish our stocks"

It may also be worthy to note that Rhea, Daniel, and Arvie were able to think of other livelihood activities apart from what they have been doing with MABOVEN. It all came as a big realization for them to come up with more resilient livelihoods which do not depend on single markets. Hence, the three movers individually invested their seed capital assistance on sari-sari stores, fruits and beverage retail and wholesale, and other market stalls.

“

Natuwa kami sa balita ng SLP Phase II para sa Boracay-rehabilitation. Para sa amin kasi 'yun. Kung mabibigyan kami niyan, gagawin talaga namin yung dapat gawin para magkaroon ng mas epektibo at sariling business ang association. Maraming salamat dahil hindi ninyo kami pinababayaan

”

"We are very happy with the news of SLP Phase II for Boracay-rehabilitation. We deserve that. Should it happen soon, we would really do whatever it takes to have a more effective business that the association can call its own. Thank you for not leaving us astray"

- Rhea Balandra



Delsa, the Ati Tribal Chieftain, beams out her nganga-tinged smile during an actual field visit to the Ati Village in Boracay island

ATI CONNECTION

Most people who fell in love with Boracay may consider it as their second home. But for the Boracay Ati Tribal Organization (BATO), this is their only home, and it just got cozier when the Ati (indigenous peoples) welcomed the SLP into their doors.

It might not be a popular site in Boracay compared to Stations 1, 2, and 3, but the Ati people reside in a 2.1-hectare ancestral domain located in the heart of the island- their own tribal village and community. Prior to the Boracay closure, the BATO relied on meager economic resources which involved their skills in craftsmanship- basket making, soap production, and even laundry services. The BATO walked on rough roads during the six (6) months hiatus.

There were fewer people visiting their village, and with that, less income for their community until Delsa Justo, 59, the Ati tribal chieftain, took the bolder steps and came up with indigenous ideas to support her equally indigenous enterprise.

Delsa utilized the seed capital assistance worth Php 15,000.00, provided by SLP, to purchase raw materials for her nganga, a chewing substance made from various ingredients such as areca nut, betel leaf/ vine, slaked lime, and tobacco. Delsa did not hesitate to acquire large quantities of the raw materials so that she may be able to produce more sets.





The photoset shows Delsa preparing a set of nganga, made from various raw materials such as betel leaf, tobacco, slaked lime, and areca nut

She said that nganga has been very popular not only among the Ati people, but also with the bisaya and other groups in and around Panay Island up to Mindanao.

Delsa takes pride that when it comes to nganga, she is queen and people who usually look for the chewing substance get referred to Delsa in a nod. Well, nganga does not ring a bell when Boracay becomes the topic, but it certainly is a 'talk-of-the-town' and pays Delsa's bills.

"Yung pagbebenta ko ng nganga, dati kumikita ako ng Php 100.00 hanggang Php 200.00 kasi nga kaunti lang naman talaga nagagawa ko dahil may kamahalan din ang ibang sangkap. Pero dahil sa kapital galing sa SLP, ngayon ay mayabang akong magbilang. Kumikita na ako ng Php 3,000.00 – Php 4,000.00 sa isang bentahan pa lang. Kaya ko pala magpalaki ng negosyo"

"I usually earn around Php 100.00 – Php 200.00 from selling nganga. That was before. I get that I only earn that much because I could only sell small quantities of it, considering that the ingredients needed were quite expensive. But because of SLP's seed capital assistance, I am more confident with the way my sales are going. I could buy more raw materials. Hence, produce more sets of nganga. Now, I manage to earn around Php 3,000.00 – Php 4,000.00 in just one transaction. I never thought that I could do this good in business"

While Delsa does good in her chewing substance, Evangeline on the other hand, pays more attention on her inventory of stocks of her sari-sari store.

Having the only commodity store inside the Ati Village, it was not too hard for Evangeline Tamboo, 40, to establish her market.

However, considering that her co-village people's jobs outside the community got affected by the Boracay closure, the daily sales of her store dropped from Php 3,000.00 per day to more or less Php 1,000.00. Evangeline's daily budget for her family got tighter and almost desperate.

After receiving the SLP seed capital assistance and implementation of the cash-for-work, Evangeline was able to bounce back and used the additional capital to sustain and replenish her store's various products and other merchandise.

“

Sa DSWD - SLP, maraming, maraming salamat.

Kahit nagkaroon ng closure, hindi kami masyadong nahirapan dahil sa cash-for-work at sa seed capital assistance

”

"A big thanks to DSWD – SLP. Despite the closure, we were not totally devastated because of the cash-for-work and the seed capital assistance"

- Evangeline Tamboon



WE'RE SAILING HOME

One common afternoon in Boracay island's shore. The Paraw or sailboat is the proud enterprise project of MASBOI Multipurpose Cooperative, one of SLP's participants for the Boracay-closure rehabilitation projects



With a total number of no less than three hundred (300) members, it is no doubt that the Malay Sail Boat Multipurpose Cooperative (MASBOI) is one of Boracay's juggernauts when it comes to enterprise organizations. But even giants fall to their knees when a bigger force knocks them down. This is how Rafael Francisco, 37, described their experiences during the Boracay-closure.

With an all year-round income of at least Php 2,000.00 per day, Rafael never thought that he, together with all the MASBOI members, would experience the huge negative impact of the closure to their main source of living. During the closure, most of the MASBOI members were compelled to look for other sources of income. Some of them ventured into construction works, while others fled to other places to look for opportunities.

"Nahirapan talaga kami. Biruin mo, talagang wala kaming kinikita araw-araw. Napakalaking pagbabago. Sanay kami na umuuwi araw-araw sa aming mga pamilya na may inuuwing pera. Wala naman kami magawa, walang mga turista eh. Noong sinubukan naman namin mag karpintero at mamasukan sa mga construction, hindi naman araw-araw ang kita doon. Walang kasiguraduhan"

"It was really difficult for us. It was unimaginable to think that we had zero income every day. Indeed a very big shift from our routine. We were used to coming home with pockets filled. Well, we can't do anything about the closure. There were no tourists at all. When we tried working as carpenters and construction workers, it did not feel right because the income was very unstable"

In the midst of the hiatus, they saw a splash of hope through the wave of interventions from DSWD – SLP, basically focusing on the seed capital assistance and the cash-for-work projects. Rafael immediately invested his seed capital on rice retailing and augmented the stocks of her mother's sari-sari store. He narrated how it all started with four (4) sacks of rice, then he managed to roll the income and profit until it was sufficient to support the basic needs of his family. As months passed, Rafael did not notice that it was almost time for Boracay's opening.

"Noong nabalitaan na namin na magbubukas na ulit ang Boracay, nagulat kaming lahat sa sobrang saya. Kaya ngayon, nanumpa ako na mas tutulungan namin na mapasaayos lalo ang Boracay. Nagsisimula kami sa pagsasagawa ng mga clean-up drives. Kung ano ang ordinansa ng Malay tungkol sa mga bawal gawin sa Boracay, sumusunod talaga kaming lahat para sa kabutihan ng nakararami"

"When we heard of Boracay's reopening, we were all surprised and delighted. That is why I pledged to myself that I will do everything to contribute to Boracay's full recovery. We started conducting clean-up drives. Whatever ordinances that Malay has for the betterment of Boracay, we shall follow. For the good of everyone who depends on Boracay for a living"

As Rafael ended his story, he looked up at Boracay's late-afternoon periwinkle sky, assuring himself that from now on, there will always be better sunrises shining over their island paradise, their home.





Rafael (in blue shirt) together with other members and boatmen of the MASBOI MPC just arrived back to shore from sailing with tourists in Boracay island



“

**Matatawag ko pa ring paraiso ang Boracay.
Kasi ngayon, mas nararamdaman mo na
nagtutulungan ang lahat ng mga tao, para hindi na
ulit mangyari yung closure**

“Boracay is still, and will always be a paradise.
Now, it is more evident that everyone is working together to save Boracay
from another closure”

”

- Rafael Francisco



Two different shots of one Boracay sunset. One featuring the famous Boracay periwinkle and velvety sky, while the other shows a rustic sunset with the MASBOI Paraw or Sailboats in the scene



Sibol

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