

## **Chapter 3**

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# **Cases of Multipurpose Collaboration through Cooperative Councils**

### **Enjoying Mutual Benefits of Engagement and Participation**

#### **Laak Municipal Cooperative Development Council of Compostela Valley**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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The Laak Municipal Cooperative Development Council, Compostela Valley, has 36 co-operative members, which regularly meets every month and is involved in education, training, mobilization of technical and financial assistance, networking, data banking, and monitoring coop related projects.

The LMCDC has entered into a partnership with the LGU, private corporations and civil society groups. LGU support is on funds augmentation, credit extension, policy issuances, transfer of management of the farmers training institute to the MCDC and building institutions for co-operative development. Regarding the direct credit assistance, LGU has so far made a total of 4.8 million pesos of non-interest bearing soft loans to cooperatives identified by the LMCDC. LGU also made a policy that all forms of assistance for co-operatives shall be coordinated through the LMCDC.

The relationship is to the advantage of both. The LGU made it more efficient to deliver coop services with the LMCDC, eliminating personnel and operations related cost. The LMCDC on the other hand provided more services to its members and is playing a key role in co-op development with the support of the LGU. This boosted the relevance of the LMCDC to municipal co-operative sector.

Effective partnership was made possible by dedication and commitment of key leaders and the local chief executives, clear view of each other's roles, unity and large stock of social capital among the co-ops and stability and consistency in policies. The LMCDC-LGU partnership is expected to continue as this is beneficial to the co-operatives and their members.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

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It only takes about two hours bus ride from Tagum City to see through a municipal cooperative development council working hand in hand with the municipal government. Located some fifty-five kilometers (55) from Tagum City, the Laak Municipal Cooperative Development Council (LMCDC) had long started and is showing the right way of forging successful relations with local government units (LGU). Unlike the rugged and bumpy roads leading to this town of hills and rolling uplands, relations between the LMCDC and the LGU are free of lumps and jolts.

The municipality of Laak is one of the eleven towns comprising the newly created Province of Compostela Valley. Laak has a total land area of 85,500 hectares, which is subdivided into forty-four (44) barangays. More than seventy percent (70%) of the land area is classified forest and agro-forest while agricultural and residential areas account only for 16% and 0.26% respectively. Its has a high elevation averaging 200 meters above sea level.

The economic base of the municipality is agriculture. Key products are food, commercial crops, and livestock. Major food crops are corn, palay, root crops and legumes while major commercial crops include rubber, coffee, cacao, copra and fruits. Livestock relies mainly on backyard production. Though the town has vast forest area it has minimal forest products, in fact, there are only two cottage industries involved in woodcraft and furniture making. The town used to be a logging concession in the 1960's before the lands were awarded to the residents.

Eighty-three percent of the 55,597 inhabitants as of 1996 live in poverty. Labor force employment is concentrated in agriculture and forestry while unemployment stands at 18%. Compounding the high unemployment rate is 81% dependency ratio. Given the significant number of people without jobs, the high poverty incidence is expected.

Infrastructure support to the population is minimal. Laak has an aggregated road network (provincial, municipal and barangay roads) of 308.06 kilometers. About 232 kilometers of these are dirt roads; 75 kilometers are graveled and 1.5 kilometers are concrete. A small portion (11%) of the households has electric power connections. Water is sourced mainly from artesian/deep wells although there is a public local

waterworks system and a privately run Junabel Water Supply. Farm irrigation facilities can service 230 hectares of the 1,100 hectares of irrigable lands.

Addressing the dire economic difficulties and widespread poverty aroused initiatives from citizens themselves. With support from non-government organizations and the local government unit, cooperatives were organized and are now engaging in various business operations. To date, there are 36 operating primary cooperatives that give credit assistance, cheaper consumer goods and farm inputs and marketing of farm products to the members. The newly found strength of primary co-operatives, however, is not enough unless their technical capability is developed and unity forged among them. Hence, these cooperatives formed the municipal co-operative development council.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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The Laak Municipal Cooperative Development Council was organized from among the ranks of primary co-operatives existing in the entire municipality. It was initially set up to serve as a venue for sharing of experiences among co-operative leaders and members as well as forum to discuss pressing external issues related to co-operatives. It was also an intention that through the council unity will be achieved.

### **Partnership from the Start**

LMCDC's first organizational meeting was held in November 18, 1991 at the old municipal hall building. The meeting was attended by representatives from 20 primary co-operatives together with representatives from the Cooperative Foundation Philippines, Inc. (CFPI) and the Municipal Cooperative Action Officer (MCAO), Mrs. Prescilla Villa Llanto. CFPI was then (and still is) assisting two primary co-operatives (Agbayon MPC and Minsata MPC) in Laak. Meanwhile Mrs. Llanto was attached to the Municipal Agriculture Office whose responsibilities include cooperatives' development.

The LMCDC was not formally organized until 1993 however. The issuance of Executive Order Nos. 95 and 96 during that year gave additional push in establishing the council. Between 1991-1992 there was a series of meetings held but organizing hit a snag since the group was still looking for the framework of the municipal structure. The meetings were limited to discussions on common problems. The core leaders, Mrs. Llanto and CFPI, continued the consultation process since the meetings already facilitated co-ops helping one another on problems related to their business operations. They talked about the operation of their respective

co-operatives and learned from the systems, procedures and strategies that were positively adopted in other co-ops.

Executive Order No. 95 of former President Fidel Ramos mandated the creation of cooperative development councils at the national, regional, provincial, city and municipal levels. Executive Order No. 96 on the other hand defined the specific roles of the LGU and the Co-operative Development Authority (CDA) in cooperative promotion, development, and regulation. Pursuant to these executive orders, the CDA issued Memorandum Circular 93-006. These issuances gave legal mandate to the MCDC.

Was the municipal mayor threatened with the formation of the MCDC? Mrs. Llanto said the mayor was not. According to her, former Mayor Reynaldo Navarro (now Vice Governor) was convinced first by CFPI and later the E.O. 95 and 96. In several occasions, he attended the MCDC meetings and trainings. His support was present since its organizing stage.

#### **An “All Co-operative” MCDC**

Membership in the LMCDC was limited to co-operatives. It was their original intention in 1991 and they carried this out in spite of the CDA Memorandum Circular No. 93-006 that identified the members of the cooperative development council. Under the said Circular, automatically the Mayor sits as the council chairman. In addition to the mayor, other members of a municipal co-operative council include the chairman of the municipal development council, a representative from the Sangguniang Bayan, a representative from the municipal federation/union, a representative from NGO at this level, and representatives from other agencies involved in co-operative development.

What Laak cooperatives wanted was a council where they can freely discuss issues and problems without being conscious of or intimidated by representatives from government. Secondly, after discussing the issues/problems, they would propose resolutions (or specific actions) for either the government, local government unit or agencies concerned to act on. Of course they could only do this through an “all-co-op” municipal co-operative development council.

The LMCDC abided by the issuances of the CDA as far as the powers and functions of the MCDC was concerned. Chairman Luay maintained during the interview that its powers and functions are those provided in the executive orders and memorandum circular, except for the membership composition.

<b>Officers of the Laac Municipal Cooperative</b>	
<b>Development Council</b>	
Chairman	: Rodolfo Luay
Vice Chairman (External)	: Geronimo Ganades
Vice Chairman (Internal)	: Andress Mulato
<i>Members of the Board of Director</i>	
1. Lindenco Chairman	:. Emeterio Abellanida
2. CMPC Manager	: Florencio Agagamao
3. Mampco Manager	: Ramon Bibera
4. Agfarmco Chairman	: Romeo Sismal
Treasurer	: Juliet Sanchez
Secretary	: Angelita Cela

Local heads of government agencies together with other non-government organizations helping cooperatives were instead invited during monthly meetings to present their respective programs and respond to issues and problems confronting the cooperatives.

The elected founding chairman was Mr. Ramon Bibera of Mangloy Multi-Purpose Cooperative. He served until 1997, presiding over the organizational growth of the council. He continues to sit in the BOD. All the other members of the Board of Directors and officers came from the cooperatives themselves, too.

### **Voluntary Membership**

Membership to the LMCDC is more of voluntary. Every cooperative existing within the municipality is an automatic member yet it depends on the cooperative concerned if it chooses to be active. Once organized, the LMCDC invites the cooperative to join the monthly meetings. If the co-op attends, well and good, but it is not compelled to attend.

Becoming an active member, a cooperative has more to gain than to lose. First, all assistance to coops pass through the MCDC. Be it from the Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA); Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), National Food Authority (NFA), Department of Trade (DTI), Nestle, Cargil or from non-government organizations, the LMCDC play a big role. Mayor Rogelio Arambala, just like his predecessor, directs all agencies/organizations wanting to help co-ops to coordinate with the LMCDC. Second, attending the meeting already has a premium. The leader can learn practical solutions to problems his/her co-op is facing, aside from the value of linking with other co-

operatives in the town. That may even open avenues for business deals. In other words, to be not isolated and left-out means participating actively in the MCDC.

The coop participation in itself has become an indicator of the current status of the cooperative. Chairman Rodolfo Luay observes that when a co-op becomes inactive it signals that said cooperative is potentially experiencing slowdown in its organizational and business operations.

From an initial of 20 primary cooperative members in 1993, membership fluctuated depending on the health of the cooperatives. The highest was in 1998 at 45 cooperatives. As of June 1999, however, it decreased to 36 cooperatives. The others were either merged, dissolved or have ceased operations.

### **The Local Government of Laak**

The municipality of Laak was created by virtue of Batas Pambansa Bilang 23 on April 4, 1979. It originally had the name of San Vicente until May 28, 1994 when the people overwhelmingly voted in a plebiscite to change the name to Laak. The people preferred “Laak “ as it carried more historical significance. Laak is the native name for a thornless medium-size bamboo. According to local folklore the then local chieftain named Datu Biyan Atay, planted a Laak to what is now Sitio Old Laak of Barangay Laak, the seat of the municipal government. In piety to the chieftain, the people named the place to the thornless bamboo he personally planted, which by the way still exists.

The town is composed of forty (40) regular barangays and four (4) special barangays. The inhabitants include the cultural minorities of Dibabaon, Boholano, and Cebuano.

The town is at present headed by Mayor Rogelio Arambala. He is supported by 165 municipal employees assigned in the different municipal offices. Revenue sources of the municipality rest largely on its Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) since its local income source is very limited. An annual budget amounting to P23, 759,257.00 require care on its allocation given the large territory and social services for the population.

## **PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

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LMCDC had since become conduit of assistance for cooperatives from the government, civil society and even private corporations. In Laak any group desiring to assist cooperatives are better off when they seek the help of LMCDC. A major achievement of the MCDC is the consolidation of cooperative resources and integrating their plans.

## **Education and Training**

The LMCDC first project was directed on institutional development of cooperatives. A series of education and training activities plus problem-solving and coaching services were made. With the help of technical assistance from CFPI, the MCDC conducted a series of training such as trainors training on pre-membership education seminar (PMES); basic bookkeeping and accounting; organizational development seminar; entrepreneurship and human resource management. CFPI continued to give training in the coming years. Mr. Danielo Munda, CFPI personnel assigned in the area, estimates that an average of two trainings were done until 1998.

In addition, the LMCDC got assistance from other groups like the Provincial Cooperative Union (PCU), the Co-operative Development Authority (CDA) and the Provincial Cooperative Development Office (PCDO). As early as 1993, the Laak LGU through Mayor Reynaldo Navarro extended help by shouldering part of the training cost.

For this year the MCDC hopes to conduct four municipal level training. The week following the interview, there is a scheduled training on financial management, again with the help of the LGU.

Developing their capability did not last long because soon the MCDC established their own trainors pool. The series of training and exposure trip to successful co-operatives in the province boosted their confidence.

## **Formation of Pools**

LMCDC has three different pools of managers, bookkeepers (plus treasurer and secretary) and trainors helping in provision of services to its members. Because the officers cannot possibly attend to all need for technical assistance, the pools are mobilized to deliver the services requested. Through the pools, the transfer of technology and learning within the co-op leaders and managers themselves is effectively facilitated.

The managers' pool has twelve members. It focuses on addressing management and operational issues. Strategies, policy systems and procedures that were developed and found effective are shared. In managing the consumer store for example, managers learn what is the allowable credit line that does not sacrifice fast turnover but still gives benefit to members.

Meanwhile the pool for bookkeeper, treasurer and secretary has more than ten members. The members assist the co-ops in recording their daily transactions, giving on-job training to these officers, computing of dividends/patronage refunds and even preparing financial statements. Skills transfer to bookkeepers is a continuing activity since cooperatives experience fast turnover of bookkeepers. Skilled bookkeepers are usually pirated by private businesses. The trainers pool undertakes basic training/seminars at the primary level. It is composed of six members from the ranks of BOD vice-chairpersons who also head the education committee in each co-operative. The more advance training/seminars are conducted at the municipal level by the LMCDC itself. In these courses, some members of the pool are resource persons for specific topics but usually there invited resource persons.

These pools are very much active. They separately hold their meetings every month. The meeting rotates among the co-op members. A host coop is identified for each meeting. Regular reports are made to the MCDC monthly meeting to update the body on their activities.

Members of the pool are provided minimal honorarium by the requesting cooperative and the LMCDC. The amount depends on the coops financial capacity. But precisely because of the varying capacity to pay the arrangement is the honorarium passes through the MCDC. Primary coops first give it to the MCDC whatever it can reasonably give then it is the latter responsible for remitting it to the members of the pool. When the given honorarium is small the MCDC augments it from its Cooperative Education Fund (CETF) collection. On the other hand, if the amount provided is big enough, the MCDC saves a little to subsidize other future honorariums for less capable coops. The MCDC maintains an honorarium ranging from 100-300 pesos per day. It is hoped that such arrangement will maintain the quality of service the pools are providing to the co-ops be it a rich or not so rich co-operative. Table 1 list the kind of trainings held.

The grant of honorarium was decided only later. When they started in 1993-94 there was even no honorarium, only transportation allowance and free food from the co-operatives. However, after the cooperatives became more capable, collecting honorarium became a policy but still subject to the cooperatives financial capacity.

### **Collaboration in Municipal Level Education and Training**

One of the major projects of LMCDC as earlier mentioned was the continuing education of cooperative leaders and members. The MCDC was successful in adopting a unique partnership in doing this.

For municipal level training, there is a four-cornered partnership adopted way back in 1993. This continues until now. It involves the LMCDC, primary co-operatives, CFPI and the LGU. The LMCDC undertakes the yearly training needs assessment among the primary co-operatives and invites the participants once the training are scheduled. During the actual training MCDC does the secretariat and documentation. The primary co-operatives meanwhile pay part of the training cost through registration fees and remitting their CETF to the MCDC.

CFPI prepares the training design proposal. The training design contains, among others, the topics and the budget requirements. Once approved by the MCDC the design is forwarded to the Municipal Mayor through the Sangguniang Bayan for budget allocation. More often than not it is the LGU that covers whatever deficit between the cost of training and what the MCDC and primary coops can contribute. The CFPI counterpart are the resource persons. Recently however, because CFPI went through re-organization in its operations, it had since transferred to LMCDC the task of preparing the training proposals. The leaders had taken this very well so far.

Another assistance from the LGU is granting to LMCDC the management of the Laak Farmers Training Center located at the Poblacion. Consequently, it also allowed free use of this facility for MCDC training and meetings.

### **Regular Monthly Meetings**

LMCDC meetings are done monthly scheduled every second Wednesday of the month. Both Mr. Bibera and Mr. Luay are proud to say that attendance in the monthly meetings is not much of a problem. Through the years majority of the co-ops are regularly attending the meetings.

Typical agenda during meeting are: 1) getting to know new attendees, 2) reading of minutes of the previous meeting, 3) sharing and updating per co-operative, 4) inputs from guest (government agencies, NGOs, private corporations, etc.) and 5) co-op pledge. Several hours are devoted for updating per co-operative. Through this reporting where the problems and success of each coop are known, the coop leaders exchange views and suggestions on the operational issues facing them. Problems like low collection rate of loans, sluggish capital build-up and decreasing membership are given attention.

It is during the monthly meetings where guests from the LGU, CDA, CFPI, PCU, other government agencies and private corporations get to introduce their respective program as well as provide advice to the co-operatives. Of course, the guest get to know the co-op leaders and set

schedules as for their visit to the primary co-operatives. We must understand that these organizations/agencies have various forms of assistance, which the co-ops may choose to access.

For fledgling organizations like the co-ops, LMCDC meetings provided the leaders and managers with practical solutions to problems, boosting their confidence.

Monthly meeting is also venue for discussion of critical issues. In 1994 the members opted to remit their CETF to the MCDC instead of giving directly to the PCU. Members felt that MCDC is more effective in delivering services needed. As an arrangement with the PCU, the MCDC retains 40% of CETF collection while the 60% goes to the PCU. MCDC uses its share for its activities that include training/seminars.

At the height of public debate on the expanded value added tax (EVAT), LMCDC passed a resolution against its implementation. This was in consideration of its negative impact to the co-operatives.

### **Cooperative Data Bank**

Monitoring cooperatives is another function of the MCDC. In order to facilitate this effectively, the LMCDC maintains a data bank containing information about the cooperatives. A responsibility of the LMCDC is identifying and endorsing specific coops as beneficiaries of technical and financial assistance from external sources. The data bank is very useful in this role. Just recently the MCDC submitted the recommended list of coops for the Lingap sa Mahihirap Fund of Congressman Prospero Amatang.

Looking at the profile of the coop members, one finds that half of the remaining 36 members were registered from 1991-1993 while the other half were registered from 1994-99. This gives an average age of 5 years and four months for Laak cooperatives, indicating how young the co-ops are in the area. Regarding type of cooperative, 34 are multi-purpose cooperatives while one is a purely credit co-op and another is a producers' coop. Though they are predominantly multi-purpose coops, their top three businesses are: credit and savings (30); consumer store (27) and marketing (23). Some are also providing transport service (9), production of goods (4) and managing a hardware store (1).

Total cooperative membership has reached 3,264 as of June 30, 1999, equal to almost 6% of total 1996 population level. Average membership is 91 individuals per co-operative though membership ranges from 22 to as high as 460 individuals.

Shown in Table 2, is the financial position of the LMCDC members. Laak cooperatives have accumulated an asset base of more than 23 million pesos. Their level of liabilities is manageable as there are two pesos worth of assets for every peso liability. The coop members have also shown their responsibility by contributing nearly 8 million paid-up share capital to the cooperatives. This translates to 32% of total assets.

Contrary to the negative notion that coops cannot earn profits, 19 cooperatives declared income in 1998. Their ability to generate income cannot be negated. Aggregate net surplus that was realized stands at 1.4 million pesos, giving an average of 75,000 pesos per co-operative.

Generally the financial statistics show the impressive performance that LMCDC member co-operatives have thus far achieved, making them important partners in developing Laak.

### **Accessing Technical and Financial Assistance**

Primary cooperatives desired an organized way of accessing assistance from the different government agencies and organizations. This objective was part of establishing the LMCDC. They wanted to do away with the situation of accessing assistance on their own. Aside from the fact that not all of them are capable of networking, the cooperatives see each other as competitors. The LMCDC then made representation to government agencies and organizations and invited them to attend in their monthly MCDC meetings. The same was done with private groups and civil society institutions.

The system works efficiently well because LMCDC annually identifies the assistance required by primary cooperatives in terms of technology, finance and training, then refers these to resource centers in government, private sector and the civil society groups. It is not uncommon to encounter on meetings the DA giving technology on upland farming, NFA offering post-harvest facilities for coops to loan, PCA encouraging coconut farmers to plant new coconut trees, DAR giving advice to ARC coops, Nestle sharing their technology on coffee, Cargill and Pioneer marketing certified corn seeds, and Monsanto coaxing the coops to buy farm inputs from them, CFPI giving tips in coop development and preparing project proposals, etc. The assistance ranges from training, technology transfer, sale of seeds, equipments at lesser prices, buying farm produce at better prices, financial assistance, preparing project proposals and others. On top of attending the MCDC meetings, the resource centers usually visit the primary coops where they can train members or demonstrate use of new equipments.

As earlier said, LGU recognized the importance of the MCDC in facilitating assistance to coops, thus it made a policy that all assistance shall be coursed through the MCDC. This also includes the monitoring of cooperated related programs and projects. Former Mayor Navarro started with this policy but still in effect under the administration of Mayor Arambala. If the PCA is going to distribute free coconut seedlings to cooperative members, it will be the MCDC that will name the co-op beneficiaries.

### **Soft Loan from the LGU**

The LGU is not wanting of support either. In addition to its support to education and training activities, the LGU in 1996 agreed to give soft loans in the amount of three hundred thousand pesos (P300,000.00) to six primary cooperatives. These are no-interest bearing loans payable in one year. This year 1999, CFPI prepared a proposal for another soft loan of three hundred thousand pesos (P 300,000.00), which, the LMCDC submitted to LGU through the Sangguniang Bayan. Again the LGU approved it. It will be given to another set of six primary cooperatives with the same terms and conditions set in 1996.

Documents provided by the LMCDC reveals that a cumulative total of 4.8 million pesos have been extended by the LGU in its financial assistance program to the cooperatives. The loans ranged from P50,000.00 to P400,000.00. Eleven (11) coops have availed the soft loan as of 1998.

The LMCDC aside from making the proposal identified the beneficiary cooperatives. This was through LMCDC Resolution No. 5 Series of 1999. A requirement of the LGU is LMCDC endorsement of the application for financial assistance from the municipal government.

With the regular monthly meeting where they are aware of the needs of each member plus the information in their data bank, naming the coop beneficiaries did not generate disagreement within the MCDC.

The endorsement applies also to applications from other agencies like DA, DTI, NFA, and private groups, which LMCDC readily provided once approved in the monthly meeting. Mr. Munda estimates that an average of eight resolutions of this nature are passed annually.

### **Identified Cooperative Beneficiaries for 1999**

- Laak Samahang Nayon Arba Cooperative (LASNARCO)
- Ceboleda Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CMPC)
- Pahamutang Free Farmers Coopertive (PAFFCO)
- Cambaoto Farmers Multi-Purpose Coopertaive (CAFAMCO)
- Imelda Multi-Purpose Cooperative (IMPCO)
- Banbanon Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BMPC)

## **ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS**

### **Partnership is Efficiency and Relevance**

Working relationship between the LMCDC and the municipal government brought benefits to cooperatives, their members, the community and the LGU. There is recognition on both parties that developing Laak is a shared goal that is better advanced by working together.

From its organization the LGU supported the LMCDC in its projects and activities and even institutionalized this support with specific policies for coop developments. The assistance was not a one shot deal. It was and is in all phases of development. In education and training, LGU made available the training center and gave funds. For delivery of assistance from the outside, LGU mandated that it must pass through the LMCDC. To augment the coops capital, the LGU extended soft loans that are non-interest bearing. The LGU even allowed use of equipment like computer /typewriters and relaxed the office hours of MCDC officers who are at the same time municipal employees. Chairman Luay is also Clerk I at the accounting office while the former Chairman Bibera is the chief investigator of the local police department. The LGU allowed them to use some of their official time to work on the LMCDC projects.

The LGU likewise created institutions to concretize the support. There is a committee on co-operatives in the Sangguniang Bayan, now headed by Ms. Llanto. Mayor Arambala also made the LMCDC member of the municipal development council. Of course, there is the municipal cooperative action officer, Mr. Philip Cui who likewise makes regular visits to cooperatives.

The collaboration gave benefit to the stakeholders. The advantage for the LGU is that there is an independent structure external from the municipal government that helps in delivering services for cooperatives that should

have been otherwise provided by the LGU directly. The cost related to personnel and operations has been reduced. Monitoring the 45 registered cooperatives cannot be done effectively by the lone coop officer, much less when the coops request training, technical assistance in auditing, bookkeeping, resolving disputes, etc. The LMCDC helped the local government in this aspect.

Secondly, the monthly meetings made access to coops easy for the LGU and other government agencies. Instead of visiting each cooperative in the barangays, which is by the way is difficult given the road conditions and topography of the area, LMCDC gathered the coop leaders in the Poblacion. During meetings the agencies can reach the cooperative leaders (most of them by the way are also barangay leaders) for consultation, planning and monitoring purposes.

Thirdly, the coordinative role was provided for by the LMCDC in the name of the LGU. Assistance coming different groups pass through the LMCDC, prioritizing among its members who shall receive such assistance. The LGU thus need not go through the bureaucratic process of choosing the coop beneficiaries.

Finally, supporting the LMCDC sends the signal that the mayor is indeed pro-coop. It shows the intention of the local leadership to support initiatives from the grassroots. Experiences in other areas prove that when this is done people view government more positively. Laak, while generally peaceful, remains to be a rebel influenced area.

The partnership then saved the LGU financial resources since it does not have to maintain a separate office tasked with cooperative development. It does not necessary have to hire its own trainer, bookkeeper, credit officer at this time because the LMCDC assist very well on these functions. By working with LMCDC, LGU made more efficient use of its resources which was already limited.

On the other hand the collaboration gives benefits to the LMCDC and its cooperative members. First, LGU assistance increased its limited resources and at the same made the MCDC more relevant because it was able to provide more help that cooperatives require. The high attendance rate in meetings and the willingness of coops to remit their CETF to the MCDC is a demonstration of its importance. Secondly, LMCDC was able to access various forms of help from the LGU. The aggregated P 4.8 million soft-loan granted to primary cooperatives the past years contributed to the growth of small farmers cooperative. With the loans, availability of cheap credit to members for production activities was assured.

The cooperative members have greater access to services. This is another benefit the coops derived from the LMCDC because instead of requesting help from the CDA or the PCU, which are located far from Laak, they can easily enlist the assistance of the LMCDC and the pools.

Lastly, the partnership made their programs and activities more sustainable. Because of the resource and expertise infusion from LGU and also other private companies and NGOs, the LMCDC have undertaken regular activities, making it relevant to members.

### **Understanding LMCDC Roles**

Key to the success of partnership is clear understanding of the role of LMCDC. To its credit seemingly LMCDC is performing its roles of leader, facilitator, networker and trainer. As the body that represents all coop in the municipality LMCDC is guiding the development direction of the coops. The MCDC has undergone strategic planning in 1996, which was reviewed and consequently adjusted in 1998. Part of the new plan is the “lead coop” concept in each major line of business. Rather than federation there will be lead coops in consumer, marketing and credit and savings.

Monthly meetings were instrumental in bringing together co-op leaders and government staff and officials, personnel from private companies and representatives from civil society. The coops bring out their issues/problems while the invited guest try to give solutions. LMCDC is networker for soft loans, free technologies and training, funds, post-harvest equipments, buyers of farm produce, etc. Thus far adequate linkages were made with the resource centers. It is laudable that LMCDC undertake training and technology need assessments every year.

LMCDC took the responsibility of training its leaders and members. Trainings and seminars, exposure trips, on the job skills training were done. Pools were created to help on this. The four-some partnerships along this line add in sustaining the education and training program. LMCDC proves the point that it has to shoulder the cost, though with its scarce resources, it also knows that external support is required.

The LGU is aware of these roles so it intervened only in critical areas such as funds augmentation, credit extension, introducing policies and building institutions. With these, cooperatives were assured of their independence the way they wanted the LMCDC to be.

Moreover the LMCDC made it successful to consolidate the otherwise scarce resources of the coops. The pools made use of the internal experts

while the CETF remittances provided funds needed in the implementation of the plans. Because of the consolidation the coop sector is seen as distinct political grouping.

### **Consistency of Policies**

In spite of the change in administration in 1998, policy environment for co-ops development did not change significantly. It is fortunate that the Mayor Arambala served as vice mayor and belong to same political party with the former mayor and so there were no major policy shifts. Without doubt the consistency of policies is a major factor in the growth of the partnership.

The LMCDC likewise knows this too. Election of BOD members is done annually election but only half of the BOD is replaced. The intention for this is to have people in the BOD who knows the underpinnings of past decision, programs and projects assuring the stability in the organization.

### **High Stock of Social Capital**

It is fair to say that Laak cooperatives have unity. During the interview, the chairman cannot recall of instances where inter-coop conflict occurred and threatened the organization. One reason for this is the iterative interaction through the monthly meetings and trainings. The pools also provided the chance for leaders and staff of different co-ops to work together. Thirdly, the transparency during meetings as well as the sharing of problems/experiences developed trust among one another.

Cohesiveness within the LMCDC is tight such that they can now identify without controversy the lead cooperatives for consumer store retail, marketing and business like credit and savings operation. The chair is proud to say that even in naming the coops that will receive soft loans from the LGU, it is openly discussed in the meetings. They could possibly do that because they have large stock of social capital.

Significant to this is the nature of being an “all-co-op” MCDC. It equalized the field for them and thus they were able to exchange views and suggestions honestly. The absence of public officials made them not aloof to interact. Common people tend to look up to public officials. Without them coop leaders and officers are of the same footing, no one being higher nor anyone being lower.

### **Dedication of the Force Behind**

LMCDC is product of collective action of the members and guiding force of some people and their cooperative. Their dedication pushed the MCDC ahead notwithstanding the many problems they encountered along the way.

The Mangloy MPC and the LASNARCO gave institutional support to the LMCDC. They provided secretarial support, inviting coop to attend LMCDC activities, sending letters to the coops and even documentation during trainings. What is critical here as pointed out by Mr. Apol Tabigue is that the institution itself committed. Thus, it is not dependent on the leadership. Up to now, Mr. Tabigue said, these coops at times take care of LMCDC fund deficits.

Incidentally Mangloy and LASNARCO are the two biggest cooperatives in Laak. With their involvement in the LMCDC, the two coops also added credibility to the LMCDC.

Among the individuals is Mr. Ramon Bibera, a policeman by profession. He was the first chairman and continuous to serve as BOD member. He by the way is the current manager of Mangloy MPC. His cooperative commitment is so deep that Mr. Tabigue was quick to say “he did not cry for anything else but for the cooperative to try a little harder”. A policeman shedding tears in front of other coop leaders asking them to give more of their time and intensify their efforts manifest great concern for their collective success.

Mrs. Precy V. Llanto is the former municipal cooperative action officer who patiently monitored the cooperatives and invited them to join the MCDC. She said she loves cooperatives so much that she spent 28 years of her professional life for cooperative development working under the then Bureau of Agricultural Cooperative Development (BACOD) and later with the Office of the Municipal Agriculturist. She was elected member of the Sangguniang Bayan in 1998 following her retirement. She is now chairing the committee on cooperatives. Her equally supportive husband Mr. Elias Llanto, of the municipal agriculture office, showed commitment too.

The current chairman Mr. Rodolfo Luay is always ready to serve. In 1994 he was the Secretary-General and then a BOD member. Last year when LMCDC suffered setback in its activities causing few members to become inactive, the elected chair resigned. Mr. Luay took over the chairmanship and soon after the LMCDC is full of dynamism again.

Both the former and present mayors are correct for assisting the LMCDC and the primary cooperatives. With their support the MCDC was transformed from a simple venue for exchange of views and experiences

to an important player in cooperative development in Laak. Their personal experiences as a community organizer of the former Ministry of Human Settlements and as a farmer allowed them to easily understand the need to work with cooperatives. Also, their being lay leaders in the church may have opened them for social and collective action.

Some would say that partnership was made because the key leaders of LMCDC are at the same time employees at the municipal government. This could be true. But add to it the dedication and commitment these people have, then, the partnership becomes fruitful!

### ***CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS***

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Positive partnership is possible as in the case of LMCDC and the Laak LGU. Though the local chief executive nor any government agency as stipulated in E.O 95, were members of the LMCDC, still the LGU assisted the cooperatives. LGU not only provided funds for training and credit but also the environment for cooperatives to strive and develop. Not disturbing the ‘all coop’ nature of LMCDC allowed the coops to solve simple problems and issues facing them.

The LMCDC is successful in foremost in forging collaboration with the LGU resulting in various benefits for its members because it realized that coops could not do it alone. The support LMCDC received augmented their few resources enabling it to sustain its programs and activities. Also, it consolidated the coops’ resources, expertise and experience and sharing them among themselves. However, the challenge is for how long they can maintain this fruitful collaboration.

Many believe that the cooperative is the way to the future but the performance so far of cooperatives nationwide exhibited both success and failure. Making cooperatives viable must then be given due attention. In facing the challenges of liberalization and globalization of the local economy, the cooperatives can at least provide anchor for people marginalized by the development frenzy, or better yet lead in maximizing opportunities and assuring niches for people of limited means to have greater economic participation. And for this to happen it requires the support from all sectors especially local government units who are at the driver’s seat of achieving development at the grassroots.

<b>Table 1. Trainings/Seminar for the Trainors Pool and LMCDC</b>	
<b>Trainors Pool</b>	<b>Municipal Level LMCDC Trainings</b>

<p><b><i>Pre-membership Education Seminar</i></b></p> <p>Ownership Seminar Co-operative Principles Team-building</p>	<p>Basic Co-op Management</p> <p>Trainors Training Marketing Seminar Financial Management</p>
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	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of Co-operatives with Data</b>	<b>Range of the Values</b>
<b>Assets</b>	<b>P 23,354,278</b>	22	<b>P 101,359 – P 6,697,765</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	10,770,378	21	13,624 - 3,811,189
<b>Paid-up Capital</b>	7,703,624	24	32,740 - 2,270,387
<b>Net Surplus</b>	1,418,152	19	8,405 - 398,647

1. Some co-operatives failed to submit Financial Statement
2. Data as of 31 December 1998
3. Two (2) co-operatives experienced net loss (P35,580 and P37,835)

**INTERVIEWEES/KEY INFORMANTS**

- Mr. Rodolfo Luay ,LMCDC Chairman
- Mr. Ramon Bibera, Manager, Mangloy MPC
- Mrs. Prescilla V. Llanto, Member, Sangguniang Bayan
- Mr. Apologeo Tabigue, Manager, CFPI –Davao-Caraga Regional Center
- Mr. Danielo Munda, Cooperative Development Specialist, CFPI- Davao-Caraga Regional Center

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## **Chapter 3**

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# **Cases of Multipurpose Collaboration through Cooperative Councils**

### **COMMUNITY BASED RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FOR LIVELIHOOD**

**THE WOMEN FOR LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATIVE OF PINILI, ILOCOS NORTE**

**Ma. Victoria R. Domingo**

### **ABSTRACT**

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Pinili, one of the 23 municipalities of the Province of Ilocos Norte, is very much known for its clean and green atmosphere, one that refreshes a tired soul from the troubles of urban life. Though a fifth-class municipality, Pinili is a model town in terms of the program implementation as shown by the plaques of recognition that decorate the municipal hall. These attest to the cooperation and complementation that the local government and the community people have developed in undertaking community projects.

The women of Pinili have played a major role in the development of the municipality. Through attendance in community organizing activities and capability building programs, they emerged from their traditional housekeeping and reproductive roles to become actively involved in development projects.

One such project is a women's cooperative which maintains various income-generating projects through which the women augment family income. With improved skills and self-confidence, they became active in the planning and implementation of community projects. The women's collective effort can thus provide an effective support for the local government in effecting transformation in the community.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

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### **Women's Domestic World**

For years, the women of Pinili were confined to performing domestic work. From early morning till late night, they do the households chores – cooking, laundering, cleaning, taking care of the kids, going to market – the routine goes everyday. They played a passive role in income generation for the family and in the transformation of the community. Although some women engaged in cottage industries like cloth weaving, backyard poultry and piggery projects, their primary role was limited to the household. Planning, decision-making and implementing community development activities were solely a man's job.

Women's activities outside of the home were basically social in nature. Mrs. Leriza Fernandez, an active woman leader of the town and member of the co-operative, observed, "We used to be members of the *Women's League*. To be a member of that organization was considered a privilege and a status symbol. We met at social functions and prepared programs during town fiestas, and that was all."

There were also other women's groups, like the Rural Improvement Club (RIC), the Samahang Kababaihan sa Barangay (SKB), Women in Development (WID) and churchwomen's groups but these were small groups, loosely organized, social in nature rather than economic and entrepreneurial.

### **The Turning Point**

With the recognition of women's capabilities as productive partners of society and the promotion of women role as productive beings, (Beijing Declaration, 1994), a group of enlightened women from the various departments of the municipal government of Pinili met and discussed the plight of the women of the municipality. The group led by Dr. Anunciacion D. Pagdilao, wife of the municipal mayor, brainstormed and planned to undertake an information campaign to organize the women.

Organizational meetings defined the pro-active role of women in the development of the community. Problems were identified and projects to address these were planned. The Women for Livelihood Development Cooperative was organized.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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The women's cooperative in Pinili was established in stages:

## **Conscientization and Dialogue**

Dr. Anunciacion Pagdilao, led the discussions in tapping women power to make Pinili an environmentally clean and a food-secure town. They looked into the present situation in the community – their socio-economic status, literacy level, family size, sources of income, capabilities and capacities. While discussing their concerns, they also identified key result areas that included livelihood opportunities, market possibilities, improvement of health and nutrition, access to basic services and credit facilities and participation in government programs. The process unveiled the potentials of the women as partners in development, as stipulated in the gender and development program.

## **Organization Development**

The dialogues led to the organization of women's groups in the barangay level called Barangay Women in Development (BWID), which were federated at the municipal level called the Municipal Women in Development (MWID).

As a result of the conscientization process, the women saw the poor conditions of their families as well as the potentials for change and improvement. Aware of the untapped women power, the women campaigned for the organization of a women's cooperative. Thus, in December 1993, the Women for Livelihood Development Cooperative (WLDC) was born.

The cooperative is composed of three structural groups. First, the general assembly consisting of the members; second is the board of directors and third, is the operating management.

The officers of the cooperative are the following:

Chair	Dr. Anunciacion Pagdilao
Vice Chair	Dr. Avelina Baldomir
Secretary	Dr. Divinagracia Apostol
Treasurer*	Mrs. Ligaya Agarano
Members	Mrs. Reyda Tugas
	Mrs. Evangeline Pascua
	Mrs. Lolita Gajes
	Mrs. Llanie Macalma
	Mrs. Florencia Apostol

*\* from the general assembly*

Each project or enterprise of the cooperative has a management group whose composition depends upon the type of the enterprise. Sales assistants, beauticians, pharmacists, tailor, dressmakers, store helpers were

hired to assist the members and cashiers. A bookkeeper is also hired to record the transactions of the various projects.

### **Capability Building**

It was very important to support the growing realization of the women about their capabilities in helping advance development efforts to perform their role as partners of the local government unit of Pinili. It was necessary to install a mechanism for empowering the women through training and seminars, demonstration classes, fora and travel. Various agencies in the government provided opportunities for the women to gain access to information and be equipped with the necessary skills that will make them productive.

The Municipal Agriculture Office provided the women with skills training in hog raising and goat raising. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provided training in improving and developing designs for the weavers. Other training in income generating home technologies such as flower making, dressmaking and tailoring, pedicure/manicure and hair culture, meat and fruit processing, dressmaking, cut flowers production and ornamental plants culture were provided by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI). The Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) provided seminars on canteen management, bookkeeping and leadership trainings; laundry soap making and food processing. The various local offices such as the Municipal Health Office (MHO) conducted classes on health management; the Population Commission (PopCom) on classes in family planning and management. The women also were taught the skill of preparing project proposals, one thing that they have not done before.

The capability/capacity building program is a continuing program handled by the education and training committee of the cooperative, chaired by Dr. Avelina Baldomir, a retired professor, and the others leaders of the Barangay WID.

The members' reaction in these training program was summed up by Mrs. Ofelia Baldomir, a cooperative leader: "A cooperative develops the members to be knowledgeable and well informed, trains them to be entrepreneurial and able to participate in policy making, planning and implementation of programs of the government, thus giving them confidence and making them whole persons. That is why, a strong continuing education that provides the women access to information is necessary."

### **Local Government Support**

Mayor Samuel Pagdilao, the local chief executive, believes in the powers of government organizations in advancing the economic and social growth of the community. From the moment of inception, the Women for Livelihood Development Cooperative was considered by the local government unit of Pinili as a partner in community resource mobilization. He challenged the leadership of the WLDC to be strong-willed and unyielding to problems and obstacles. He also urged them to see these problems as push factors for the organization to become stronger and more determined to attain its mission and goals.

Mayor Pagdilao subscribes to the philosophy of the Women in Development and Nation Building Act (RA 7192) that women are partners in development and thus, must be empowered. He advances the women's active involvement in all phases of project management. "There can be no genuine participation unless they are involved in planning, problem identification and problem solving. In that way when they are engaged in the process, they feel their ownership of the programs," he said.

Support from the local government unit comes in various forms. The government appropriates an amount for cooperatives from the municipal development to be used to support the activities of cooperatives. In recognition of the capabilities and commitment of the officers and staff of the cooperative, the local chief executive provides for the representation of the cooperative in the various special bodies. He also provides facilities (transportation, venues for training, seminars), manpower (carpenters, technicians, bookkeepers) and materials (wood, cement). Technical assistance from the MAO is also extended to the cooperative. The dental and medical facilities of the MHO are also used free of charge.

### **Participation of Women in Development Projects**

This capability-building program has transformed the women into productive participants in the development process. They have become able partners of the men of Pinili in carrying out domestic concerns for the family (reproductive role), implementation of community programs (community development role) and livelihood programs (productive roles).

## **Livelihood Projects**

The WLDC established various projects which they own and continuously manage. Three canteens were put up, one at the junction/crossroad before entering the town; a second at the public market; and a third at the vicinity of the municipal hall of Pinili.

Aside from serving snacks and meals, these canteens also provide catering services. The local government offices are regular customers.

The cooperative also operates a beauty parlor, tailoring, dressmaking shops, cutflower and ornamental plants project, mushroom production project and swine dispersal program. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) provided technical assistance to the mushroom production project, while financial assistance came from the Ilocos Norte Integrated Development Foundation (INIDFI).

Members of the cooperative are also extended credit assistance for livelihood projects such as meat and vegetable vending, meat processing and loom weaving. This program has benefited many of the members. (See Appendix 1 for list of beneficiaries.)

Mrs. Magdalena Gamayo, the most senior weaver (78 years old) who started weaving when she was 18 years old, is one of the beneficiaries of the support of the cooperative and the local government to the weaving industry of Barangays Lumbaan-Bicbica and Sacritan. Through a loan provided to her and the other weavers, they can continue weaving the famous binakol cloth, which is fast depleting the previous years. She expressed the need for further assistance in terms of expanded markets.

## **LGU Component Programs**

Aside from the direct participation of the women in the activities of the cooperative, their improved capability enabled them to become actively involved in the LGU program *Gin-awa ti Barangay* which means *development of the community*. This is a continuing program that seeks solutions to pressing concerns of the people and brings the local government closer to the people. The women of Pinili are very much involved in the various component programs.

### ***The Municipal Clean and Green Program***

The women take the lead role in the education and information dissemination of the clean and green program. The barangay WID and the cooperative leaders plan with the residents of their respective barangays

strategies to be carried out in the all-out campaign for the re-use and recycling of waste through the segregation of non-biodegradable and the biodegradable wastes, implementation of the waste management program, planting of trees, maintaining their home gardens and compost pit, and the like.

### ***Management of the Purok Center (Dap-ayan)***

These *dap-ayans* are literacy centers where non-formal education classes are conducted. These centers were erected in strategic places in the barangay where people could also meet and discuss issues that affect them.

### ***Disaster Preparedness Program***

During calamities the women complement the men in rescue activities. The women distribute relief goods, and provide first aid treatment to the victims. The women are trained to do this by the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council.

### ***Food and Nutrition Program***

Malnutrition being the concern of every mother, the WLDC organizes trainings in the barangays to equip the rural housewives with cooking and food processing skills to adequately provide for the nutritional needs of the family and for the processing of surplus products which could be sources of additional income. The Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) coordinates with the WLDC in the conduct of women's classes for maternal and child care.

### ***Population Management Development***

The WLDC coordinates with the Population Commission in the implementation of seminars on responsible parenthood, consequences of early marriage, role of youth, health and family planning.

### ***The Self-Employment Assistance (SEA)***

The WLDC extended to its members financing of livelihood projects through the SEA. This is through the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office.

### ***Socio-Cultural Development Program***

The women lead in various activities related to the revival and sustainability of the rich Iloco culture in the form of "*daldallut*" (the pre-

marriage ritual), “*kin-nantaan*” (folk songs), “*suelto*” (*duets*) and “*zarzuela*” (scenes and stories in songs) and “*comedia*” (*performances about the lives of kings, queens, prince and princesses*). These cultural activities are usually staged during barangay and town fiestas. The nearly-extinct loom weaving industry of barangay Lumbaan –Bicbica and Sacritan that produces the famous “*binacol*”, is being revived so that the younger group of women would continue the industry.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Monitoring is a built-in component of the projects. The officers of the Board of Directors (BOD) take care of their own zones. They are responsible in supervising projects in their respective zone assignments. The BOD is assisted by the Barangay WID officers. As Mrs Rafaela Reyes, President of the WID at Barangay Barbar, puts it, “We have to perform our roles because we are a part of the community. We are the community.”

## **PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

### **Integration of the Women into the Mainstream of Society**

The women of Pinili used to be marginalized, performing only reproductive roles and domestic chores. Now they are active participants in community development activities. Their husbands have learned to accept their wives’ new roles. One member of the cooperative said, “This time, when I go out to attend a consultation forum or a meeting of the cooperative, my husband readily understands that I also have a role to play in the community. He takes over my domestic work.”

### **Employment Generation.**

The different enterprises undertaken by the women’s cooperative have assisted 55 housewives in household level livelihood projects, in addition to the existing enterprise projects. It also provided employment to skilled women who were recruited from among the members.

### **Population Management and Development.**

A marked decline in population growth in the Ilocos province has been observed from 1993 to 1997. The Ilocandia Express (4:6, August 11, 1999) noted the birth rate per woman in Ilocos has declined from 4.2 births per woman in 1993 to 3.4 births per woman in 1998. This is relatively lower than the national average of 3.7. The Ilocos region has the second lowest birth rate among the 16 regions in the country. Although this statistics is for the whole Ilocos Region, to some extent

Pinili may have contributed to this as a result of the WLDC's population literacy program and the involvement of the women in challenging activities beyond their traditional domestic roles.

SBM Evangeline Pascua believes the decline of birth rate is an indicator of the population education and advocacy program of the cooperative and the women of Pinili.

*Employment generated by the income generating projects of the Women for Livelihood Cooperative Development*

ENTREPRISES	NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED
Canteens	1 manager; 1 cashiers; 3 helpers
Pharmacy/Drugstore	1 manager; 1 sales assistants
Parlor	1 manager; 1 casshier; 1 helper-alternate beautician
Mushroom production	1 Project In-charge; contractual laborers as the need arise
Tailoring	1 tailor
Cut Flower/Ornamental Garden	1 gardener
Credit/re lending	1 manager

### **Membership in Municipal Policy Making Bodies**

As a result of improved capabilities, the women are now represented in various boards, councils and committees at the municipal level. The Municipal Health Board, People's Law Enforcement Board, Municipal Peace and Order Council, Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council, Tourism Council, Task Forces in the Clean and Green Program and the Municipal Development Council now have women members. The chairman of the co-operative (WLDC) and the chairman of the (MWID) represent the non-government organizations (NGOs) in the various policy making bodies.

As a result, the women have developed positive self-confidence. They now feel a sense of responsibility for efficient delivery of services to the various barangays. This has brought the government of Pinili close to the people.

Mrs. Rafaela Reyes claims, "We have gone a long way. We have become articulate about issues affecting us. We have become active in community work and are very much involved in the affairs of our municipality. We know we are part of the successes of our town. It is very rewarding."

### **Recognition of the WLDC.**

In recognition of its achievements, the WLDC was judged Most Outstanding NGO (at the national level) by the Progressive Alliance for Community Development (PACD) in 1998. The award was given by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Also in 1998, the WLDC was awarded the *Gawad Kappa* plaque of recognition for its outstanding performance as a non-government organization in the municipality during the Civil Service Month.

In 1995, the WLDC was awarded a plaque of recognition for the *Outstanding Loomweaving Functional Literacy Project in Purok Sunrise, Brgy. Lumbaan-Bicbica, Pinili*. This award at the provincial level brought the WLDC to the regional level. The Chair, Dr. Anunciacion Pagdilao was also chosen as *Outstanding Non-Government Organization Literacy Worker in Non-formal Education in Region 1*.

## **ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

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### **At the level of the Cooperative**

The problems met in the project were many and varied. Community acceptance of the greater involvement of women in community development activities took some time. A strong mass-based information campaign was undertaken. Women leaders had to dialogue with the rural women who believed in the conventional role of women. The men, especially, needed some orientation/reorientation. Their masculinity was threatened when the women started their small scale, household level projects, and when they started attending/participating in meetings at the town.

Gradually, through the Gender and Development (GAD) Program, they accepted the change. When the women were not at home, the men did the cooking and feeding of the children. The spouses learned to cooperate and coordinate their activities with the wives. This resulted in better home management. Food and meals became more balanced and even the children were better taken care for. The men also appreciated the additional income from the women's projects. Hence, real partnership between the men and women resulted.

A continuous education program to empower the cooperative as an agent of change and transformation in the countryside is imperative. This must be one that is sensitive to the needs and make up of the people in the countryside.

Sustaining the livelihood programs is also important. The WLDC has limited funds. It depends on funds from the Self-Employment Assistance Project, from a share in the Municipal Development Fund, from the Ilocos

Norte Integrated Development Foundation Incorporated, Countrywide Development Fund, and the Cooperative Development Authority.

In other words, the cooperative is heavily dependent on external funds. There is a need to increase equity contributions from the members to finance its programs. There should be more investments from the members in terms of their share capital, strong capital built-up programs, savings deposit and some fund raising activities. There should be more intensive livelihood enterprises of the women at the cooperative and at the household level.

### **At the Municipal Level**

The municipal mayor finds the sustenance of the local government support for non-government organizations difficult but he is determined to meet the challenge because the women cooperative had been instrumental in achieving the LGU's targets such as: 1) sustainable and effective enforcement of peace and order in all the barangays, 2) sustainable environment protection, reforestation, conservation and wise use of natural resources, 3) improved economic standards of living, 4) promotion of historical and tourism ; 5) effective local administration through effective delivery of basic services, institutionalization of data management and maintaining the purok system. The cooperative has been an effective partner of the local government in project management and as such, the partnership should be sustained.

Mayor Samuel Pagdilao stressed, "There can be no real development without the genuine participation of the constituents of the local government, to which all efforts are focused. They are the people who compose the municipality, hen they must be actively involved in the affairs of the community."

## **CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

The strength of the municipality of Pinili comes from its people. The role they play is imperative to the successful implementation of the programs and projects of the local government.

### **The NGO-LGU Partnership**

It is a struggle to extract the support of people in the municipality. It takes an understanding of the local situation through a careful study of various alternatives to solicit genuine participation from them. The reason for this is the traditional notion that the delivery of basic services is the sole responsibility of the local government. Only when there is a sustainable

partnership can the vision and mission of the local government be achieved.

### **Mass-based Development Pedagogy**

The people are bound to the traditions and beliefs they had lived by. This makes it very important that a culture-friendly and gender sensitive pedagogical approach must be employed. The Education and Training Committee of the cooperative or an equivalent body in the farmers' organization, *zanjera/gunglo* (*association of water users*) or any other rural organization/non-government organization, must be empowered to be able to provide educational activities to members of the organization in the community. A continuing adult education program should be in place as a support to the efforts to develop and prosper.

### **Inter-agency Efforts**

An integrated approach instead of the usual piecemeal kind is very much needed. Various agencies of the government have only one goal – to improve the quality of life of the people. With this, efforts of the various government offices must be integrated, synchronized and focused to a unified target. Through this, the limited resources are maximized through resource sharing and overlapping and unnecessary duplication of functions are avoided.

### **Conscious and Intended Involvement of the People**

The cooperative is not the only NGO in the community. However, in Pinili, Ilocos Norte, the cooperative of the women (WLDC) led in the various activities. It was very important for people to be involved in community activities. Genuine participation is not only confined to the implementation of projects but even to start as early as the project conception. This is done through consultations. A clear understanding of ownership and belongingness to the community makes possible a sense of ownership among the people. A clearly defined role of each group/sector contributes to the more effective and efficient implementation of programs.

Sustainability of the programs remains a challenge to the government and the co-operative. This could happen when there are : 1) political will on the part of government; 2) genuine participation from the cooperative sector and; 3) commitment and sincerity of both the government and the cooperative.

When people see that the benefits they get as a result of their involvement in the affairs of their community are worth the effort, the practice becomes

an integral part of their daily living and eventually is embedded in their culture.

#### **INTERVIEWEES/KEY INFORMANTS**

Hon. Samuel Pagdilao, Mayor  
Dr. Anunciacion Pagdilao Chair, WLDC  
SBM Evangeline Pascua, Sanguniang Member BOD, WLDC  
Mrs. Ligaya Agarano, Treasurer, WLDC  
Mrs. Cristina Valbuena, Municipal Agriculture Officer  
Mrs. Rafaela Reyes, Coop Leader, Pagdilao  
Mrs. Ofelia Baldomir, Coop Leader  
Mrs. Zosima Pagdilao, Coop Leader  
Mrs. Leriza Fernandez, Co-op Leader  
Mrs. Gloria Pacariem, Co-op Leader  
Mrs. Herminia Corpuz, Co-op Leader  
Mrs. Linda Gampong, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Estelrlina Ubibi, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Teresita de la Cruz, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Marieta Pascua, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Pacita Galinato, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Elita Paculan, Member, Weaver  
Mrs. Clarita Madarang, Member, Weaver

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## Chapter 3

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# Cases of Multipurpose Collaboration through Cooperative Councils

### **Ecological Amelioration for Sustainable Development**

#### **A Showcase of LGU-Cooperative Partnership in Palompon, Leyte**

Eulogio S. Tupa

#### *ABSTRACT*

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Palompon is one of the oldest and biggest municipalities in Leyte, Region 8. It is relatively plain coastal lowlands where human habitat is concentrated.

For decades the mangroves along the coastal areas and the Tres Marias Islets (Tabuk, Gumalac and Cabgan) which are mangrove islets and the wide shoals provided abundant supply of fish and an array of exotic shellfish to Palomponanons. As a rich fishing ground it is said that in the olden days one could hook a fish almost instantly after the line is thrown.

However, in the past 10-20 years, degradation of the mangroves, coral reefs, sea grasses and other marine resources was left unchecked. Unregulated catching of fish during spawning seasons, rampant illegal and destructive fishing, uncontrolled extraction of coral stones and other ruinous human activities led to the serious deterioration of valuable sea resources. This resulted in the depletion of fish, shellfish and other marine products greatly affecting the economic and social well-being of 80-90% of coastal inhabitants who heavily depended on the marine resources for their daily subsistence.

The LGU in partnership with PACCI and with the support of practically all sectors in the community pursued the program on ecological amelioration for sustainable development. The objective is to restore, protect and manage the remaining resources thru resolute legislations, stop

all destructive human activities and enhance people's participation to reverse the worsening situation.

After just one year of implementation, destructive fishing, cutting of mangroves, extraction of corals and other ruinous activities were either substantially reduced or totally stopped, fishermen's income increased, local government income in fisheries increased and partnership between LGU and Cooperative and other civil society organizations was strengthened. The concerted effort in addressing the issue led to its success.

## ***BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT***

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Palompon is one of the oldest and one of the biggest municipalities in Leyte. Located in the northwestern part of Leyte, it is a coastal town with the widest shoal and an estimated coastline of 36 kilometers most of which is planted to mangroves. Of the 50 barangays comprising Palompon, 26 are located in the coastal area. Slightly off the coast are three mangrove islets collectively referred to as Tres Marias Islets, namely: Tabuk, Gumalac and Cabgan which serve as a natural shield from the fury of nature. Palompon is a home to 22 out of the 26 known true mangrove species found in the Philippines. These different mangrove species belong to 13 families. Fish corals and seagrasses also abound in Palompon seas. Palompon is a rich fishing ground and it is even said that in the days of old, one could hook a fish almost instantly after the line is thrown.

For years, Palomponganons have forgotten the immense influence of the marine resources to their daily lives. Unconscious of its limitations, harvesting of fish species was unregulated, more and more people used not only more efficient gears but also destructive and illegal fishing as well, cutting of mangroves was uncontrolled, gathering of corals was left unchecked and picnickers enjoyed cutting mangrove stems to serve as stove for heating and cooking their "baons" while branches were used as firewood. All these have put tremendous strain on Palompon's coastal resources destroying fish habitats and various types of marine life from mangroves to corals to seagrasses and to fishes.

The uncontrolled human activities resulted to the depletion of fish species, declining fish catch, rendering fishing activities as economically non-viable and decreasing income of the municipal fisheries. This worsening situation was brought to the attention of the 1995 elected local officials during People's Day Celebrations, bidding of fishing zones, monthly meetings of Punong Barangays, School Programs, Community Assemblies, Social Gatherings and other community affairs.

To address the above problems the Local Government Unit (LGU) in coordination with the Palompon Community Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc. (PACCI) and other civil society organizations planned to conduct consultations with the different stakeholders like the fishermen, consumers, professionals, lay leaders, government agencies, people's organizations, non-government organizations and the different sectors of the community.

The LGU chose PACCI as its major partner because it is the biggest and most active organization in the locality. PACCI's involvement and contribution to local governance started even before the implementation of the Local Government Code of 1991. The cooperative's presence in the community was felt by the local government in the late 80's when PACCI involved itself in various aspects of community activities. Moreover, in 1998 when PACCI was made a conduit of livelihood loans from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) it assisted 605 livelihood projects and generated employment for 1,429 Palomponganons. The cooperative helped the government increased its income by requiring all PACCI members who availed of the Tulong Sa Tao (TST) loans to get a Mayor's Permit of the project to be financed. Moreover, on December 3, 1991, PACCI entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to allow PACCI to undertake the management and protection of the Tres Marias Islets through a Stewardship Agreement which was confirmed by the LGU of Palompon in its Resolution No. 126-090992. The Tres Marias Islets are now the focus of the local government program on coastal resource management.

The consultations conducted by the LGU in partnership with PACCI focused on what could be done to stop immediately the continuous and fast deterioration of the marine resources which play a vital role in Palomponganons' economic and social life. The series of consultations led to the conceptualization of a holistic program on Ecological Amelioration for Sustainable Development (EASD). Its general objective is to restore, protect and manage the fishery and marine resources and at the same time alleviate poverty thru improved fish catch and provision of alternative livelihood activities. The EASD program activities include environmental advocacy, environmental legislation, economic alleviation and the creation of a "Super Body" to provide an organizational mechanism on the various planned activities.

## ***PROJECT DESCRIPTION***

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Through Executive Order No. 1, s. 1995, issued on July 31, 1995, Mayor Ramon C. Oñate created the Human and Ecological Security Commission

(HESC) whose gigantic task is to eradicate all illegal activities relative to environmental destruction. Appointed were 11 casual employees to man the HESC. The “Super Body” was headed by a full-time volunteer, Mr. Ruben Surigao, who was appointed as Administrative Assistant on Environmental Protection without compensation. Attached to the Commission were two members of the Philippine National Police. On the other hand, the Sangguniang Bayan (SB) created the Human and Ecological Security Committee as one of its standing committees to take charge of the necessary ordinances and resolutions to support the EASD program.

The HESC in partnership with PACCI spearheaded the Environmental Advocacy. Information dissemination and education campaigns were conducted down to the sitios to raise the level of the people’s awareness on the importance of a restored ecology. Environmental protection and rehabilitation, environmental ordinances and resolutions, ill-effects of dynamite fishing, cyanide fishing, fishing with the use of fine mesh nets and other destructive methods of fishing and wanton destruction of the mangrove forests were some of the topics discussed. Over and above the raising of peoples awareness, the dialogues were designed to move more people to contribute some effort or initiate actions that will help ensure the return as early as possible of the wondrous magnificence, splendor and productiveness of the Palompon seas. Other civil society organizations like the Host in Keeping Earth Resources Safe (HIKERS) Air Rifles Association of Palompon (ARAP), Alyansa sa Nagpakabanang Kabataan (ANAK) or Alliance of Concerned Youths, Jaycees and others volunteered too in assisting the LGU in Environmental Advocacy.

### **Awesome Force of Community Solidarity**

True enough, participation and openness during the dialogues easily convinced the people to support the EASD program. This mass support was the driving force behind the successful first municipal-wide mangrove planting activity where more than 60,000 propagules were planted by more than 1,000 volunteers coming from practically all sectors of the community. For the first time in the history of Palompon, the awesome force of community solidarity was displayed. PACCI and other civil society organizations shared in providing snacks to the volunteers. The municipal-wide mangrove planting activity was institutionalized through the SB Resolution No. 126-240599. But for the HIKERS, mangrove tree planting is a year-round activity. The Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT) is also having a one hectare area planted to mangroves for research purposes.

### **Innovation in Legislation**

The urge to innovate in local governance should be tempered with the needs of the stakeholders and should be strong and have multi-sectoral support so as to overcome the natural resistance that individuals will always put up against development changes affecting their way of life.

As a component to the EASD program, environmental legislation was necessary. The SB adopted the Program on Ecological Amelioration through Resolute Legislation, code named PEARL 1.

This was to stop the rapid destruction of the environment, ultimately bring back the abundance of marine and farm products, and maintain a balanced ecology and a sustainable development for an improved living.

Planned activities included the following:

- Pass legislation/resolutions on the conservation and development of marine and forest life
- Pass legislation/resolutions to regulate fishing and farming methods
- Create a municipal body for a 24-hour duty to stop illegal fishing, illegal logging and other illegal activities detrimental to a balanced ecology
- Construct artificial coral reefs for fast-track replacement of destroyed coral reefs due to illegal fishing
- Procure speedboats, high powered binoculars, radio handsets, cameras, scuba diving equipment and other equipment/facilities necessary in the implementation, monitoring, documentation and evaluation of laws, rules and regulations designed to effect a sustainable development.
- Link with government and non-government organization/entities engaged in ecological development for financial, technical and other types of assistance

From the different reactions aired during the dialogues, it was gathered that there was a need to designate a place to allow marine life to be left alone to spring back to its former shape and productivity. In response to this issue the SB after a public hearing and after thorough deliberation, approved Ordinance No. 228-021095 on October 2, 1995 declaring Tabuk Islet as Marine Park, Fish and Bird Sanctuary. Section 3 of the ordinance delegated the management of the Sanctuary to the Municipal Eco-System Management Board (MESMB) composed of all NGO's interested in environmental protection and development with PACCI as Chair.

The said ordinance declared the whole of Tabuk Island to the extent of 200 meters from mangroves trees on the eastern, northern, western and southern sides as "no man's land and sea ". Hence, a total ban was imposed on all forms of fishing, hunting, getting of corals cutting of

mangroves, anchorage of sea crafts, construction of rest huts and all other human activities. The only exceptions are human activity done in connection with a research or other authorized activities like planting of mangroves and coastal clean-up.

A month later, Municipal Ordinance No. 234-11125, imposing a total Ban on the Catching of Danggit during Spawning Seasons from February to April of Each Year, was passed. During these months on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> moon of the new moon, fishing from 6:00 in the afternoon to 6:00 in the morning is totally banned for all fishing methods that will catch danggit. Since 1996 when the above ordinances were fully implemented, PACCI is the most active partner of the LGU in conducting night patrols and to some extent PACCI provided financial assistance for gasoline and snacks for the “night guards”. Then on February 19, 1996 the SB passed Ordinance No. 237-190296 Regulating the use of Superlight for Fishing Purposes and Prohibiting Certain Sophisticated Methods and Devices of Fishing. This ordinance took cognizance of the plight of the marginal fisherfolks whose means of livelihood are jeopardized with the presence of sophisticated methods of fishing.

As a way of regulating superlight, the ordinance allows only the use of electric shiners up to 4 bulbs of 200 watts each per banca and a maximum of 6 units of Coleman/Petromax lamps per banca. The exception to the above provisions is when they are used for research and other scientific purposes. Section 6 of the ordinance also declares unlawful within the municipal waters of Palompon the following sophisticated methods or devices of fishing: “Hulbot-hulbot”; “sudsud”, “sahid”, “bunsod” and “baling” with less than 3 cm. of mesh net mesh, compressor, dynamite fishing and trawl fishing. The succeeding section strictly prohibits the use of obnoxious substance and other toxic wastes, materials and substances such as “tubli” and cyanide.

### **Softening Socio-economic Impacts on Legislation**

Expected to put up resistance to the implementation of the seemingly anti-poor legislations were the fishermen, shellfish collectors, mangrove firewood gatherers and all those who wholly or partly depend on marine resources and marine products as source of their daily subsistence or as main or alternative livelihood. To soften the economic and social impact of the ordinances specially on the declaration of Tabuk Islet as a Sanctuary and the Ban on Catching Danggit During Spawning Seasons, the SB adopted the Program on Economic Alleviation thru Rural Livelihood codenamed PEARL 2. Included in the activities of PEARL 2 are the following :

- Pass legislation/resolutions relative to economic alleviation and rural livelihood
- Create Municipal Livelihood Committee to plan, implement and supervise the livelihood projects of the LGU
- Organize fisherfolks, farmers, women, youth and underprivileged for livelihood projects
- Facilitate barangay electrification to enhance economic activities day and night
- Facilitate construction of farm to market roads to encourage food production activities in the remote areas of the municipality
- Procure equipment/facilities for monitoring documentation of livelihood activities like motorcycles, cameras, computers and others
- Encourage/support/sponsor trade fairs, seminars/workshops/researches, etc. to complement the livelihood projects
- Source financial, technical and other types of assistance for livelihood projects
- Link with government/non-government organizations engaged in livelihood projects

The SB of Palompon thru Municipal Resolution No. 113-110995 as approved on September 11, 1995 created the Municipal Livelihood Committee (MLC) to formulate plans, coordinate programming and supervise implementation and operation of the Livelihood Program of the Municipal Government. The Municipal Mayor was given the authority to appoint the Chairman and members of the committee. Appointed were the Vice-Mayor as Chairman and the Municipal Agricultural Officer and Social Welfare Officer as members. Their first task was the formulation of the Municipal Livelihood Program Operating Guidelines and Policies which included provisions on: Qualification for Financial and Technical Assistance; General Supervision and Policy Formulation; Source of Funds; Types of Livelihood Projects to be assisted (Environment Friendly Projects); General Credit Policies; Administrative Remedies for Delinquent Loans; and Requirement for Financial Assistance.

In partnership with the PACCI, organized as of date are 11 barangay-based organizations of marginal fishermen, women groups, market vendors and mixed membership livelihood associations. Of the 11 groups, 10 were given financial assistance and 2 of the 10 have been granted financial assistance twice. The livelihood program is geared towards a fast-track economic alleviation thru technical and financial assistance to new and existing projects specially for groups or associations who have no way of seeking the needed assistance from National Government Agencies or from other sources of assistance. More important to the livelihood

project is its link to the value of savings, where association members are asked to continuously save so that when financial assistance is withdrawn or when financial assistance is not sufficient, the savings can be used to augment their capital and the project will continue. This is a departure from the dole-out mentality and it is one key to meet the survival and enabling needs of people thru self-reliance. The livelihood associations organized mobilized resources either as share capital or as savings deposit in the PACCI.

### **Prevailing over all Odds and Threats**

Just like any program the EASD underwent, and is expected to continue to undergo, some trials. Some of the threats and the processes by which the administration was able to overcome them are related below.

In many instances since 1995 arrested violators of laws and ordinances requested assistance from those in power or asked the intercession of political leaders of those in power that they should not be penalized with the reason that they are political supporters of those in power. Sometimes threats to withdraw their support during the next election were made.

Armed with strong political will, the new set of local officials have never given in to requests or intercession for non-imposition of penalties. The local officials are consistent in their stand that violators should be appropriately punished. The local officials' firmness in their principle is always known to the public whenever there are opportunities to speak before a gathering. Those apprehended violators who were appropriately penalized are the best witnesses to the death of the political protégé mentality.

Typical of our coastal communities, the imaginary boundary lines of our municipal waters are not clear. Dynamite, cyanide fishers and other illegal fishers exploit this situation. They fish near the believed boundaries but when patrol boats are sighted they will move to the territory where campaign against illegal fishing is not as strict as in Palompon. Since pursuing illegal fishers beyond one's territory is risky, the HESC personnel made an alternative solution, which is more economical and more effective. They are employing "stationary guarding". Thru the legal fishers who are effective informers, the HESC personnel learned the specific areas where illegal fishing are conducted and the approximate time illegal activities are done. What the patrol will simply do is to stay in the identified area or near the area.

Their presence serves as a deterrent to do illegal activities. In effect, illegal activities were stopped and the HESC personnel exerts less efforts and spends less for fuel of patrol boats. For a sustainable and concerted drive

to stop illegal fishing and restore deteriorated marine resources, a plan is in the making for a Memorandum of Agreement with the neighboring coastal communities to complement one another.

### **Pockets of Resistance**

Although there were no violent reactions aired during the public hearings conducted on the ordinances specifically on the Declaration of Tabuk Islet as Sanctuary and on the Ban on Catching Danggut during Spawning Seasons, there were skeptics who thought that the ordinances were only passed for record purposes. That, they will become part of the files of ordinances that were never implemented for fear of losing the support of fisherfolks and their dependents and relatives during elections, However, contrary to many Palomponganons belief implementation of the above ordinances were as strict at the start as it is today on its fourth year.

Just a few days after implementation of the Sanctuary, prohibiting not only all types of fishing but also getting inside the boundaries, a group of more than 30 women, mostly wives of fishermen and who are shellfish gatherers, had an audience with the Mayor and Vice-Mayor. They complained to the local officials that the ordinances are killing their families softly because the banned area is the richest source of the different varieties of shellfish in Palompon. The most that the local officials could do was to appeal to the complainants that the ordinances were designed to help increase their harvest in the near future and that the local government is more than willing to amend or even shelve the ordinances once they are found later to be not beneficial. The LGU requested for 6 months to 1 year of implementation before changes will be made.

While the women showed signs of being partly convinced of the appeal, back home they continued to grumble and pressured the Punong Barangay to intercede in their behalf. Bothered by the complaints, the Barangay Captain of Ipil III approached the Vice-Mayor and intimated his plan to resign because majority of his supporters are fishermen and shellfish collectors and that they have threatened not to support him anymore. The Barangay Captain was prevailed upon to stay for the next 6 months to 1 year after which a final decision will be made. The 1997 barangay elections came and the Barangay Captain who thought of resigning earlier ran unopposed because his constituents saw and actually experienced the beneficial effects of the program.

### **Blocks to Speedy Assistance**

The short sighted interpretation of the fundamental principle on local government budgeting that local government funds shall be spent solely

for public purposes and bound by the Policy and Implementing Guidelines Governing Livelihood Programs and Projects is one problem area. The guideline issued by President Corazon Aquino designating eight (8) specific national agencies primarily responsible for the execution of livelihood programs and projects, was a threat to the implementation of PEARL 2 and the EASD. The local officials were aware that without the livelihood component to soften the socio-economic impact of the seemingly anti-poor ordinances, the program was sure to fail.

Since the EASD was the first, the biggest and the most risky at the time, the LGU concentrated its efforts and did not leave any stone unturned to make it succeed. Aside from the serious lack of funds for the purpose, government requirements such as registration of organizations with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) or other registering agencies before financial assistance can be extended made it almost impossible for the strategy to be realized. Discouraged by the requirements and usual long wait from the organizational stage to registration to receipt of financial assistance, one organization voluntarily dissolved before financial assistance was extended.

After searching for ways and means to facilitate the prompt release of financial assistance, the SB passed Municipal Resolution No. 113-110995 Creating the Municipal Livelihood Committee. The Municipal Livelihood Committee was then organized by the Mayor and it immediately worked on the Operating Guidelines and Policies. Included among other requirements are the organization of barangay-based associations for livelihood, recognition of the organization by the MLC and confirmation by the SB in place of registration with national registering agencies, and approval of requested financial assistance by the SB. The Municipal Resolution creating the MLC and the formulated guidelines were sent to the Commission on Audit, Provincial Office, for comments and suggestions regarding the livelihood Program. In response, the Provincial Auditor interposed no objection and further suggested to organize a Municipal Livelihood Screening Committee (MLSC) to re-assess participants, check requirements, see to it that beneficiaries are real and qualified. The favorable response of the Provincial Auditor and the compliance to the organization of the MLSC triggered the start of the release of financial assistance for livelihood projects.

### **Dole-Out Mentality**

A common thinking among our rural folks is that government money is usually released as dole-out to the poor. In the organizational stage, the common question asked is whether the livelihood financial assistance is

like the KKK, fishing loans, livelihood loans, Masagana 99 and what not in the past administrations.

From the organizational stage, to the extension of financial assistance, to the monitoring of association activities, the members are consistently and repeatedly informed that the financial assistance is a loan and should be repaid. Like a cooperative, assistance will only be extended to those who will show that they are willing to help themselves. Help to oneself is gauged thru the habit of saving for the future. The bigger the savings, the bigger will be the financial assistance. Members savings are made thru the association and deposited with PACCI either as share capital or as savings deposit which can be utilized to augment their financial assistance from the LGU. Prompt payors are given priority in the grant of bigger re-loans.

## **PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

### **Ecological Integrity**

Mangrove stands are now denser and back in their lush green and growth. A new mangrove species was also found by researchers from the Save Nature Society. Since 1996 almost 200,000 propagules have been planted in the Tres Marias Islets.

### **Improved and Bigger Fish Catch**

Through a searchlight on nighttime one can see schools of fish leaping out of the black sea, barracudas skipping along the surface and swordfish dashing in different directions, sometimes slamming against patrol boats. During daytime different varieties of fish playfully pass under the bridge connecting the viewing tower.

Fisherfolks now claim that 3 to 5 hours of fishing will yield 8-10 kilos of catch as compared to their catch before the program, which used to be only 2-3 kilos for 8-10 hours of fishing. The sizes of their catch are also bigger now. At the back of Tabuk Islet more than 2,000 Philippine Mallards feast daily on marine products and provide a spectacular sight to people.

### **Reduced Destructive Methods of Fishing**

For quite sometime now the HESC have not heard of complaints of dynamite fishing, fish poisoning and fishing using fine mesh nets. They have not also received reports of illegal fishing methods employed by fishermen.

From the local treasury, records show that income in fisheries has substantially increased despite a tax on petromax lamps, non-motorized bancas, fishpens, fish nets and other taxes paid by small fishermen.

The following is the record of income in fisheries of the municipality:

1994	-	P 9,530.00
1995	-	27,679.95
1996	-	41,703.61
1997	-	74,754.75
1998	-	85,870.50
1999	-	107,394.95 (as of July)

### **Increased Fish Diversity**

In 1995, before the implementation of the program on EASD, a team from the fishery sector of the Provincial Agriculture Office made a sampling of fish diversity in a 500 sq. meter area in the sanctuary.

In January, 1997, a year after the program was implemented, another sampling was made and the findings are as follows:

#### **Fish diversity (500 sq. meters)**

	December 1995 (1 <sup>st</sup> Sampling)	January 1997 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Sampling)
<i>No. of pieces</i>	523 pcs.	4,996 pcs.
<i>Indicators</i>	412 pcs.	1,074 pcs.
<i>Commercially Valued Species(CVS)</i>	111 pcs.	3,892 pcs.
<b><i>Percent composition</i></b>		
<i>Indicators</i>	78.78 %	21.63 %
<i>CVS</i>	21.22%	78.37 %
<i>Pieces per sq. meter</i>	1.046/sq.m.	9.932/sq.m.

### **Fishermen and Women have Alternative Livelihood**

From 1995 up to date, the Municipal Livelihood Committee in coordination with the PACCI organized 11 livelihood associations. Ten (10) of the associations have been granted financial assistance and two of them have been granted re loans. The livelihood associations are as follows:

- a.) Cambinoy Fishermen's Association
- b.) Trece Marias of Sitio 6, Tinago
- c.) Bitao Women's Association
- d.) Plaridel Women's Association

- e.) Cruz Fishermen's Association- Dissolved
- f.) Tabunok Livelihood Association
- g.) Magsaysay Women's Association
- h.) Market Vendors Livelihood Association
- i.) Belen Livelihood Association
- j.) Liberty Self-Employment Assistance for Kaunlaran
- k.) Canipann Livelihood Association

The mobilized savings of the above associations are deposited with PACCI, in effect increasing the coop's asset and its loanable funds. A total of P1,131,300 has been released since 1996 as financial assistance to the livelihood projects. This has greatly cushioned the socio-economic impact of the ordinances making Tabuk Mangrove Islet as "no man's land and sea" aside from banning the catching of danggit during spawning seasons.

### **Improved Stability of the Cooperative**

The sale of an LGU lot to PACCI enabled the cooperative to start its construction of a three-storey building which will include offices for its ever growing number of employees, venue for training, decent lodging rooms and a municipal library. This has greatly improved the stability of the cooperative.

On the other hand the LGU was able to finance its livelihood projects from the proceeds of the sale amounting to P583,000 This has helped cushion the impact of the ordinances on the economic and social life of the stakeholders.

It is worthwhile to note that this mutual exchange of advantages has been going on even before the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991. In 1991, before the LGC took effect, the LGU constructed a market stall at a very strategic area and allowed PACCI to utilize the area as a display center for products of PACCI members and non-members as well. PACCI encouraged their members while the LGU encouraged the non-members to display their products in the Center. While other stall holders constructed their stalls at their own expense and are paying a rental of P300 per month, PACCI did not spend a centavo for the stall and is not also paying rent.

### **Other Barangays Have Declared their Own Fish Sanctuaries**

Experiencing the tremendous effects in protecting an area, barangays Buenavista and Cangcosme have declared their own sanctuaries. Other coastal barangays intimated that they will follow. Barangays Buenavista, Duljugan, Cantuhaon, Plaridel, Parilla, Sn. Pedro Cruz and Cangcosme

have established mangrove nurseries. PACCI financially assisted the establishment of the nurseries.

### **New Livelihood Opportunity Opened Up**

Before the EASD program there were only two or three households throughout Palompon who were engaged in making boneless danggit. A year after the program implementation, many households along the southern coastal barangays are engaged in the new and profitable livelihood. Boneless danggit is made for local consumption and for export to other municipalities and provinces. To balikbayans, boneless danggit is their favorite pasalubong.

### **Awarded the Galing Pook Award**

The Galing Pook Award is an annual contest on innovations and excellence in Local Governance. This is sponsored by the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Local Government Academy (LGA), Ford Foundation and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In July, 1997, in the awarding ceremony at the Malacañang Palace, PACCI and other Non-Government Organizations (NGO) which contributed to the success of the program were represented.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

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The program on Ecological Amelioration for Sustainable Development was born out of a felt need – of what the fishermen, the consumers, the academe and many sectors in the community demand. That something drastic should be done to stop the fast deteriorating situation of Palompon's rich marine resources.

### **Shared Vision**

In the EASD program of Palompon, the planning, implementation and monitoring of the program was multi-sectorally participated. Civil Society Organizations such as PACCI, a cooperative, was chosen as its major partner because of its known influence in the community. In actual life, whether we like it or not, no matter how small an organization is, it has its own influence which will affect other members of the community. So, in the conceptualization of the EASD, political affiliation was set aside and practically all organizations were invited in the dialogues. The concerted efforts to address the major issue crushed the fragmented approaches and

led all those involve to work as one in the Ecological Amelioration for Sustainable Development.

### **Continuous Mutual Exchange of Advantages**

Benefits derived from the program are two-way. When PACCI bought the municipal lot, it increased its picture of stability. On the other hand, the LGU got the badly needed funds for its livelihood projects which is a very vital component of the program.

In the 1999 Strategic Development Planning of PACCI, LGU representatives were asked to participate, in return the LGU asked for PACCI representative in the Municipal Strategic Development Workshop which has for its output the 5-year Development Plan of Palompon.

PACCI and LGU are continuously providing each other institutional support. Other organizations also share in the mutual exchange of advantages. Socio-cultural and civic activities, educational activities, lakbay-aral and other activities always see the LGU and PACCI as willing partners.

### **Skeptics Turned into Believers and Supporters**

In public hearings conducted regarding the ordinances, no violent reactions were heard. Many thought that they were only “palabas”, that the local officials can not afford to offend specially the poor fishermen for fear of losing votes during election, and that the new ordinances will die even before their implementation. To the skeptics, the destructive practices were already incorrigible and touching or changing the way of life of those concerned is an impossible mission. To the surprise of the skeptics, implementation of the seemingly anti-poor ordinances was as strict at the beginning as it is today and is now on its fourth year. After one year of implementation, the tremendous good effects of the program became the talk not only of the municipality, but also of the province, region, country and abroad where some Palomponganons work or reside. The program was made a major issue during the 1998 elections and the electorates were simply given the choice to vote to go back to the old ways of destructive human activities and risk losing their livelihood, or they could vote for the already tested way of managing the marine resources. The people loudly voted for the latter, voting overwhelmingly the re-electionists.<sup>1</sup>

### **Nature’s Resiliency**

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<sup>1</sup> Headed by Mayor Ramon C. Oñate and Vice-Mayor Eulogio S. Tupa.

The EASD clearly demonstrates that nature is capable of springing back to its original productiveness if left alone without human disturbance. Mangroves, corals and sea grasses will grow. Fish, shellfish and other marine creatures will reproduce in great numbers if they are completely free to feed and multiply. Reproduction of fish, shellfish and other marine creatures is fast but recovery of mangroves, corals, and sea grasses is very slow. To at least maintain the balance, planting of mangroves and construction of artificial coral reefs are done.

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