Lifeline from Coco Coir

Javier Integrated Coco Product Farmers Association

Typhoon Yolanda laid waste to the entire town of Javier in Leyte, leaving enormous piles of coconut husks that the survivors, through the help of DTI, turned into coco coir as their source of income. This "lifeline" is now an emerging industry.

The devastation of the province of Leyte by super typhoon Yolanda left the town of Javier with bundles of coconuts lying around, adding up to the farms' mounting piles of husks, for which, just a month earlier, a processing plant had been put up by the municipal government to turn them into coco coir.

The processing plant had barely come into full swing to establish a coco coir industry in Javier when the typhoon struck, leaving most of the residents at a loss on what to do.

But quick to the rescue came the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), bringing twining machines and stationing them in various households as Shared Service Facilities (SSF) project for women.

Thus, the women would go to the processing plant to get the yarns or hanks that had been carded and produced after separating the fibers and decorticating the husks from the shell.

The women would then braid the yarns into ropes through DTI's twining machines in the households that serve as SSF.

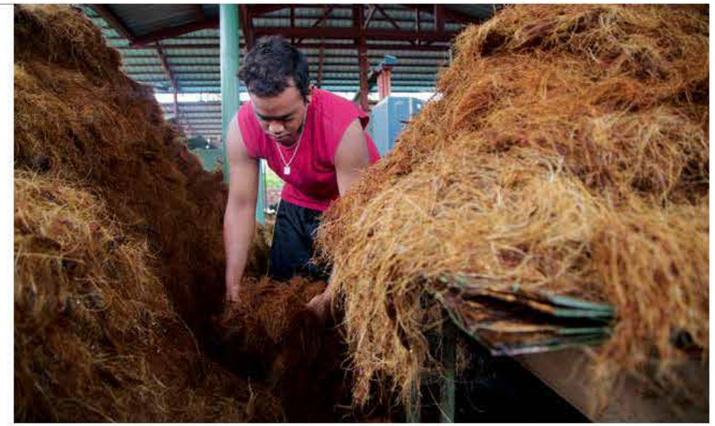
Also at the SSF are handloom machines for weaving the braided ropes into coco coir nets, which are used as an anti-soil erosion remediation measure along the slopes of road networks, mining sites, reforestation areas, landscape regreening zones, parks, and even community gardens.

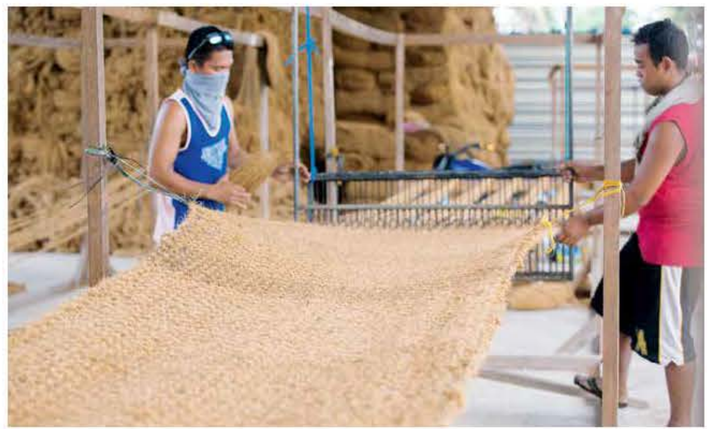
The handloom machines were also provided by DTI, which helped the community find potential buyers for the coco coir nets.

IMPACT ON MORALE

Emerging from a tragedy, the new industry raised the morale of the people who were then about to lose even their self-respect.

SHARING THE BUSINESS
From a farming community that can hardly get by with Php 150 a day, Javier has found a new source of income with something considered as trash by others.





LOOMING THE COIR
After acquiring the coconut husks from farms, they put them into special machineries that will turn them into fibers. These fibers are then sifted and twined into ropes. The ropes are then handloomed into nets.

HOW DTI HELPED

Through DTI's **Shared Service Facilities (SSF)** project, Javier Integrated Coco Product Farmers Association was able to acquire twining and handloom weaving machines to process the enormous pile of coconut husks into exportable finished products.

From twining alone, a family can earn Php 400 a day depending on the number of hanks it can make. From farming, one makes only Php 150 a day, which is not enough to meet an average household's needs.

"This industry helps us tremendously," says twiner Myrna Laniba. "It's great because I can do this at home while I take care of my children and clean the house. My kids help me too, after school."

FUTURE PLANS

When asked about the future, the women beamed with optimism, citing a tufting facility that the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), in partnership with the municipal government, would soon provide them, aside from another assistance coming from DTI.

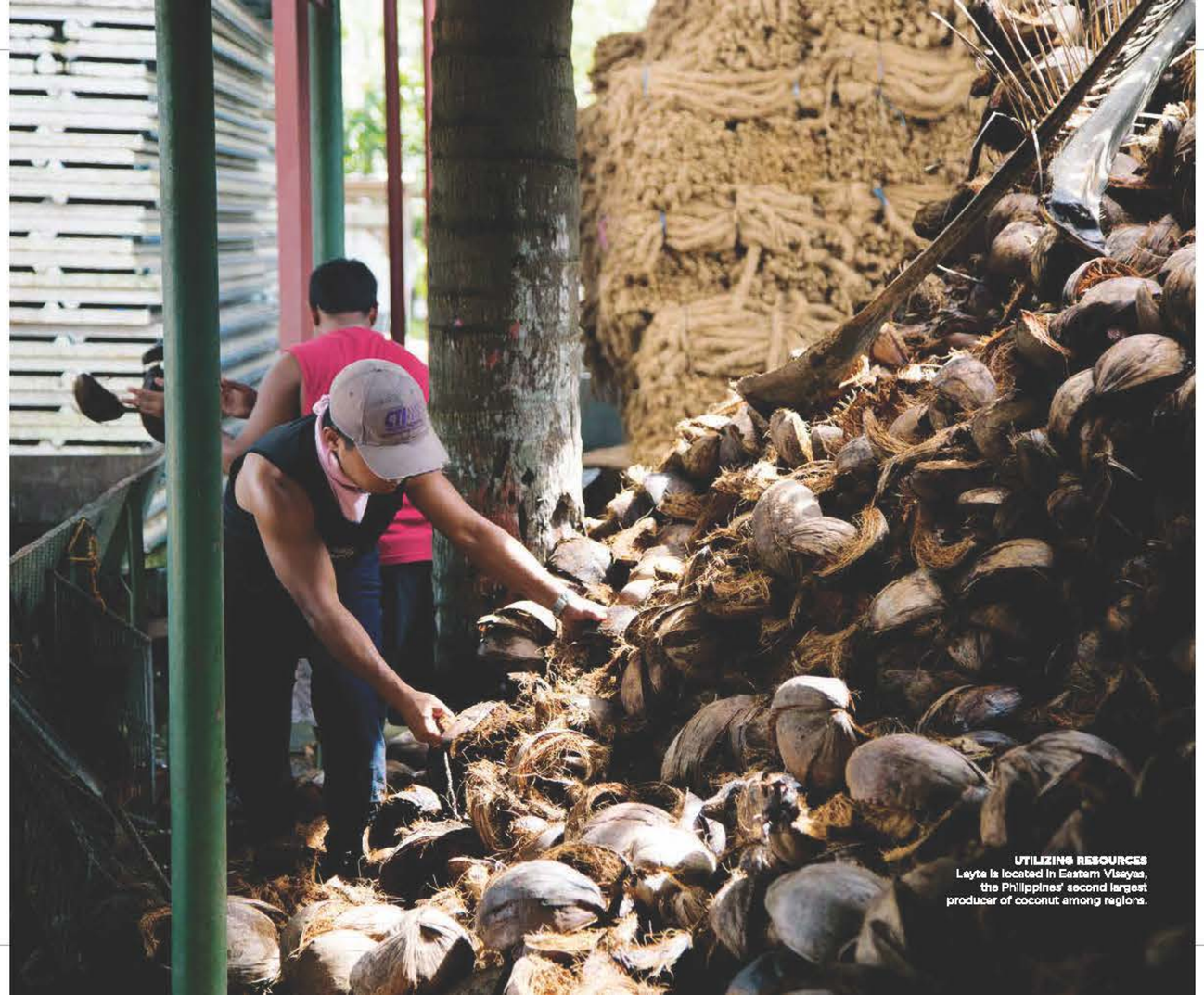
That facility will take the coco coir to another level, enabling them to produce commercial-quality mats, geotextiles, and rugs.

The technology is expected to replace the decorticating machines and raise their incomes by another Php 10.50 per kilo.

They say the PCA will procure and award them the tufting machines next year, when they have acquired the advanced skills to make various products for shipment nationwide and abroad.

Once fully operational, the facility can immediately benefit around 500 families and generate as much as 2,500 jobs solely from twine making.

Meanwhile, the people of Javier town are exuberantly grateful to DTI, not only for rescuing them from hunger, but more so for saving them from mendicancy and restoring their sense of dignity.



UTILIZING RESOURCES
Leyte is located in Eastern Visayas, the Philippines' second largest producer of coconut among regions.

HOMEWORK
With the assistance from DTI, housewives were given their own twining machines. They were able to earn some cash in the comfort of their homes.

DID YOU KNOW?
In other parts of the world, people train monkeys to harvest coconuts for them.

Making Handwoven Husks

1. Coconut husks are collected from the farms and brought to the processing plant.
2. The plant's buster machine flattens out the husks.
3. The decorticating machine separates the natural fiber, or cocopeat, from the exocarp, the outermost layer of the coconut.
4. The carding machine disentangles and turns the cocopeat into thin strands, which are sifted or strained to remove dirt.
5. The clean strands are collected by twiners for braiding into hanks or yarn.
6. The twiners sell the braided hanks back to the plant.
7. The hanks are woven into nets manually through handlooms.
8. The nets are sold to buyers.