



Rising from the Storms

Julie Anne's Handicrafts

A wife, who founded her business on the devastation left by Typhoon Reming in 2006, saw her factory nearly wiped out by another typhoon. Learning how to rise from the ruins, she is certain of replicating her success.

Standing on the wreckage of her typhoon-ravaged factory by the roadside towards the Torrijos town proper, Julie Anne hardly grieved the devastation caused by Typhoon Nina in December 2016. Instead, she proudly talked about how her factory had risen from the ruins of a similar tragedy a decade ago.

Julie Anne's Handicrafts was established in the aftermath of Typhoon Reming, just as devastating as Typhoon Nina in destroying the farms on the island province of Marinduque.

Located along the typhoon alley in the West Philippine Sea between the Tayabas Bay to the north and the Sibuyan Sea to the south, Marinduque is small enough to have all of its 953-square-kilometer land area run down by a storm.

Yet, in March 2007, still reeling from the trauma caused by Typhoon Reming, the then 26-year-old Julie Anne Reginio came up with a business to compensate for the loss of the family's only source of livelihood: copra.

The typhoon practically blew away all the flowers and fruits of the island's coconut trees, rendering copra untenable.

Luckily, the buri palm trees held their ground against the storm and seemingly offered their leaves to those who could weave. Julie Anne's husband Luisito knew about the business opportunities from weaving the fibers of the leaves of the buri tree (*Polyandrococcus caudescens*).

PERSEVERANCE

Julie Anne Reginio shows a mixed expression of sadness and self-assurance, knowing that she can always rise from the ruins of her typhoon-ravaged handicraft business, as her workers proudly demonstrate how the fibers of the buri palm can do wonders in the hands of expert weavers.

CALM AND COMPOSED
With whatever remains of this handicraft factory, its manufacturing business continues.



MORE THAN JUST WEAVING
To Rosinda, one of Julie Anne's hired weavers, the way Julie Anne runs the factory makes a day of weaving feel more like hanging out with friends than doing work.



"At first, we tried our hands at weaving when [Typhoon] Raming made our copra livelihood vanish into thin air," Julie Anne narrates in Filipino.

She approached the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for help. More than providing the necessary training for livelihood skills, the DTI in Marinduque has been promoting entrepreneurship.

From training, to developing new designs and finding her first clients, DTI guided Julie Anne in logistics and obtaining government permits.

"At that time, I knew nothing about putting up a business. I just went to the DTI and asked how."

"DTI introduced me to my first buyer, Marietas Trading. Another client from the Netherlands was also referred by DTI," Julie Anne recounts in Filipino.

The buntal weaving business has taken her to foreign countries like China in September 2014, Japan in February 2015, and Germany in February 2017.

Some of Julie Anne's weavers have been with her since she started the business in a small shack just outside her house. Among them is Torrijos native Rosinda Gombon, 43, who cannot forget her first woven item.

"It was made of pure tingting, and I had to tighten up the weaves. The process was so tedious that I got extremely tired down to my legs, but I was very, very happy," Rosinda narrates, also in Filipino.

However, Rosinda's joy was dampened by Typhoon Nina, which also washed away the bleached buntal threads that were to be woven into finished products.

Even then, Julie Anne appeared calm and composed. Work continues with whatever is left of her factory.

After all, it was not the first time that a typhoon destroyed her source of income. Probably, it also would not be the last, but a full decade in business has prepared her for the worst.

And having been trained by DTI, Julie Anne is confident of once again rising to the occasion.

HOW DTI HELPED

Through DTI's Shared Service Facilities (SSF) project, Julie Anne was able to acquire trainings on developing new designs for buntal weaving. Her business continuously expands, taking her to foreign countries like China, Japan, and Germany with the help of the trade fairs organized by DTI.



DID YOU KNOW?
Buri palm has the largest flower head among all the palm species around the world.

? Making woven buntal products

- 1 Bleach the buntal threads.
- 2 Apply the dye color that the client wants.
- 3 Dry the dyed threads.
- 4 Weave the threads according to a specific pattern for each product.

* Each weaver produces around 10 to 15 products daily.



CRAFTED WITH DEDICATION
A bag made of buntal fibers, which are bundled and dried before being arrayed on a roll made of wide bamboo splits for weaving.

