

Weaving to Prosperity

Sto. Niño de Plaridel Parish Multi-purpose Cooperative

Growing at a phenomenal pace, a cooperative has branched out into various businesses that make it resemble a public-owned conglomerate in its diversified operations.

In just seven months, a cooperative in the coastal city of Baybay, Leyte, has earned nearly a million from a capital of only Php 25,000.

The capital was raised by the cooperative in Barangay Plaridel through Church-supported fundraising activities—singing and caroling—and contributions from 23 members.

Now, the Sto. Niño de Plaridel Parish Multi-purpose Cooperative (SNPPMC) has a lending business, a consumer goods store, a catering service, and a woven bag manufacturing enterprise, all having sprouted from its Php 860,000 earnings in its first seven months.

It began in 2002 when the parish priest felt the need to develop livelihood sources to alleviate poverty.

STARTING FROM NOTHING

Back then, they had nothing to start with. “So, two members and I worked for it without receiving any salary,” says Merlina Lumakin, now the manager of the cooperative.

They resorted to fundraising activities that yielded Php 25,000 for their first enterprise—lending—which proved inadequate to be of considerable help to the community.

CAPITALIZING ON SKILLS

Their lack of funds, however, was more than compensated by their skills in weaving and the abundance of pandan trees in the area, making the cooperative manufacture bags. The women did the weaving and sewing, and the men the harvesting of pandan leaves and making twines for bag handles.

The venture was successful, enabling the cooperative to expand into another basic commodity—food. Thus, the cooperative’s catering service was born.

THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE RESOURCE

While the members knew a lot about weaving and cooking as handed down to them from one generation to another, they did not know how to run a business professionally.

“We didn’t know how many raw materials to buy, or how many plates or spoons we should prepare,” Merlina admits.

So, she packed her bags and headed for Cebu. “My initial thought was to ask around the city and buy books,” Merlina says of the only possible source of information accessible to them at that time.

But by serendipity, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) came into the picture. “Before, there was no other government agency helping us,” Merlina reveals.



DID YOU KNOW?

Aside from its culinary uses and health benefits, pandan leaves are also used to ward off bugs and cockroaches.

WORLD-CLASS

Resources and skills make a combination that will surely result into a product. With additional training and assistance, this product will then grow into a business. With their skills and resources, SNPPMC produces world-class bags woven from pandan leaves.



WORKING TOGETHER

An aspiration started by a parish priest bloomed into one triumphant business. The cooperative capitalized on the skills and the resources they have, and added effort and passion in the work they do. SNPPMC is a perfect example of a community that works hard together to achieve success together. Their bags were able to reach not only other parts of the Philippines, but also other parts of the world.



GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY
SNPPMC has provided livelihood for both men and women from the community. Women are responsible for weaving and sewing, while men are responsible for harvesting pandan leaves.

Seminars on bag manufacturing and marketing were conducted by DTI, which also hired designers from Manila for the hands-on training and coaching. DTI also provided them with a Shared Service Facility (SSF) project comprising machinery, equipment, tools, systems, skills, and knowledge under a shared arrangement.

The SSF enabled the cooperative to make souvenir items from even the smallest and thinnest pandan strips and other waste materials, cut cost by as much as 50 percent, and engage in an almost "zero-waste" production process—from weaving reeds into bayong to crafting bags of various sizes and styles.

As an asset, the machines reduce capital cost as production volume increases, thus raising the cooperative's margins.

In seven months, the cooperative's production of pandan and bariw products increased by almost 50 percent. The seamstresses and weavers could now make various new items of their own designs for high-volume orders.

MARKETING SUCCESS

Soon, the cooperative was already participating in trade fairs organized by the DTI, and gaining orders from buyers in Manila and Cebu, and from direct exporters to the United States and Indonesia.

"We owe our success to our own sacrifices, hard work, and the unwavering support of DTI," Marlene says.

The cooperative has diversified into making garments and embroidered items, as its membership has grown from the original 23 to 560, all weaving their way to prosperity.



WORKING IN HARMONY
Members of SNPPMC work hand-in-hand, sharing their skills and abilities for the work to be harmonious. Everyone exerts effort for the shared success of the cooperative.



Processing Pandan Products

- 1 Harvesting of pandan leaves.
- 2 Making product designs after dyeing the fibers.
- 3 Cutting patterns and sewing.

HOW DTI HELPED

The Sto. Niño de Plaridel Parish Multi-purpose Cooperative was awarded sewing and edging machines under DTI's Shared Service Facilities (SSF) project to help them gear up towards improving the production efficiency of their pandan souvenir items, as well as cut cost by as much as 50 percent. This accounted for the rapid expansion of the business.