



CURRENTS

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Farmers receive irrigation projects, gov't vows for improved services

■ Lioneil G. dela Cruz, PAIS-CO

Leaders of Regional Federation of Irrigators Associations (RFIAs) from all over the country convened on July 23, 2015 at the Newport Performing Arts Theater, Resorts World Manila, Pasay City to ceremonially receive more than 400 recently-completed irrigation projects from the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) during the Mass Turnover of Completed Irrigation Projects. The total cost of turned over projects is roughly about Php3.5B covering an area of 124,633.54 hectares with 48,234 farmer-beneficiaries. These projects are composed of both communal and national irrigation systems.

Attending the grand occasion representing and delivering the message of President Benigno Aquino III is Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization, Secretary Francis Pangilinan. The President, through Pangilinan, highlighted the importance of the agriculture sector to the country's economy as it is the one feeding the whole nation.

Aquino emphasized that the completion of these irrigation projects will ensure the improvement of lives of the farmers, increasing palay production, and providing food for the Filipino people.

He also added that the government is doing its best to uplift the agriculture sector. He said, *"Doble kayod tayo upang isulong ang sector ng agrikultura kung saan buhay na buhay ang mga pananim, buhay na buhay ang kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka, at buhay na buhay ang ating ekonomiya."*

The speech also pointed out that through these projects, more farmers can now enjoy more than 2 croppings per year that can push the country to even export rice unlike before that we import from other countries.

continued on page 2

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Page 2 – (STRAIGHT FROM THE TOP)

– Message of His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III President of the Philippines during the Mass Turnover of Completed Irrigation Projects and National Convention of Irrigators Associations Resorts World Manila, Pasay City July 23, 2015

Page 3 – Gov't Agencies announce 'next steps' for IAs

Page 4 – (EDITORIAL)

– VIG... What's Up?

Page 5 – (PLANS AND PROGRAMS)

– NIA Administrator Visits Two Major Projects in Caraga

– BBMP Coming into Reality

Page 6 – NIA websites to be "Drupalized"

Page 7 – PIDP continues its Implementation Progress as the Project draws to completion

Page 8 – Davao Holds Administrative and Finance Mid-Year Review for CY 2015

Page 9 – PHOTO NEWS

Page 10 (SIGNIFICANT EVENTS)

– NIA RO1 Launches ARISEP

Page 11 – Partnership Built in Water

Page 12 - 13 – (IA SUCCESS STORIES)

– IRPEP and Loog IA: Partners in Women Empowerment

Page 14 - 15 – (LIMELIGHT)

The Anatomy of a Wallflower: My Story as a NIA employee

Page 16 – (HEALTH & WELLNESS)

Bakit Payat pero Malakas kumain? Bakit Mataba pero Mahina kumain?

PANGILINAN TENDERS RESIGNATION AS PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT

Posted on the website of the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agriculture Modernization (OPAFSAM) on September 15, 2015

Secretary Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan tendered his resignation as Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization. In a letter dated September 8, 2015 addressed to President Benigno Simeon Aquino III, Pangilinan expressed his gratitude to the President for his trust, confidence, and support.

“The support extended by His Excellency and the Cabinet has been crucial in addressing the challenges in the agriculture sector and the government’s vision of good governance and inclusive growth.” President Aquino appointed then former Senator Pangilinan as Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization on 5 May 2014 through Executive Order No. 70, transferring four agencies under the Department of Agriculture to the Office of the President: the National Food Authority (NFA), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) through Executive Order No. 175 signed on the same day.

“The appointment as Presidential Assistant has provided a unique opportunity to serve the country, further expanding our understanding of the needs of our people and the intricacies of governance,” added Sec. Pangilinan.

Under Pangilinan’s helm, reforms were instituted in the four agencies, with cases filed against erring employees and those they are in cahoots with. The NFA put in place reforms in their importation process and made unprecedented rejection of bids that were not to the benefit of the country. This resulted to the lowering of rice prices

even during the lean months— a factor in the lowering of the inflation rate which is now at .6%. The average price per metric ton of rice imports was also reduced, from USD \$560 to USD \$440 through a transparent prices that allowed for the rejection of bid offers that were too costly.

The increase in the circulation of NFA rice resulted to the lowering of rice prices from Php 44.00 per kilogram for well-milled rice and almost P41 per kilogram or regular milled rice to Php 33.00 per kilogram at present. The NFA turned in a profit of Php 1.8 billion in 2014, for the first time in two decades.

Four big-ticket irrigation projects worth close to Php 30 billion were approved by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), such as the Balog Balog High Dam Project, Jalaur Multipurpose Dam Project, Umayam River Irrigation System Project, Agno River Irrigation Project, Casecnan Irrigation Project, and the Malinao Irrigation Project. More than 400 irrigation facilities were turned over during Pangilinan’s term.

The coconut scale insect infestation from outbreak level is now down to manageable level, with only 1 hotspot remaining out of 57. In a mission report dated May 2015, the United Nation Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) described the OPAFSAM-PCA cocolisap intervention effort as commendable and praiseworthy. Pangilinan’s resignation is effective end of office hours of September 30, 2015. The Secretary hopes that the time period will be sufficient for the necessary transition for the four agencies and for the President to decide on his replacement.

“It has been an honor serving under your administration. I continue to wish for your success and for a better future for the Philippines,” Pangilinan ended. ## OPAFSAM





“ *Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person – not just an employee – are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability.* ”

- Anne M. Mulcahy, former chairperson and
CEO of Xerox Corporation

EDITORIAL

VIG... what's up?

A service-oriented agency, NIA seeks to improve and sustain its operation as a government-owned-and-controlled corporation. In 1984, Viability Incentive Grant (VIG) was provided through Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 3 as approved under Board Resolution No. 4043-83 on December 19, 1983. It aims to motivate NIA field offices “to attain and maintain financial viability while maintaining satisfactory performance in programmed activities”. VIG was provided as a supplement to existing incentives and bonuses. It is a monetary grant to viable units for distribution to personnel who have performed commendably in attaining financial viability. Since then, VIG payment has been effected to qualified employees of viable regions.

In 2015, NIA Management has temporarily suspended the payment of VIG for CY 2014 due to notices of disallowance issued by Commission On Audit (COA) unless with clearance from the Office of the President (OP).

Among the sources of NIA's revenue, income from net Irrigation Service Fee (ISF) topped the list. Based on Consolidated Income Statement, Corporate Fund 501 – Regular & NDC, net ISF is in ascending trend –

beginning on December 31, 2011 amount collected was P 1.103 B ; in 2012 at P 1.350 B; in 2013 at P 1.555 B; and, in 2014 at P1.804 B.

To be viable, all strategies have been planned, agreed and accomplished. Attained viability is a result of field offices' formulating and engaging on time-tested strategies, often times out-of-the-box approaches combined with commitment, dedication and diligence.

Thus, it is not unusual for NIA field office personnel doing rounds as early as 5:30 in the morning just to meet the farmers especially during peak collection time and requesting the support of local government units (LGUs) and Irrigators Associations (IAs). Cost-cutting measures in the offices have been applied. These are among the joint efforts of officials and employees towards attainment of viability. Significant outcome is the strong linkage and partnership of NIA with IAs and LGUs in ISF collection.

Thus suspension of giving the incentive even temporarily, brought negative impact and demoralization among

field office personnel who performed a higher level of accomplishment and gave their utmost participation to attain viability. Jobs must be performed with competence yet the essence of motivation emanating from the Memorandum Circulars on giving VIG must be consistently and timely given to deserving employees.

Generating income from all sources is a concerted effort from the management to the rank-and-file employees especially on the field offices. Hence, the management must be steadfast in fulfilling its directives. Noteworthy is the management's action of elevating it to the Office of the President thru GCG. Asserting for the restoration of VIG payment means that employees are recognized and valued for the performance beyond expectation. This creates an atmosphere of respect, builds up esteem and engenders higher productivity.

NIA Administrator Visits Two Major Projects in Caraga

■ Jane B. Huqueriza, PRO, CARAGA

NIA Administrator Florencio F. Padernal arrived at NIA-Caraga early morning of July 30, 2015 surprising employees of the Regional Office. With him was Atty Ailynne C. Agtuca-Selda, the new Administrative Department Manager, who with the Administrator himself took the chance to have a consultation meeting with the Administrative and Finance group before proceeding to the first leg of their visit.

With Acting NIA-Caraga Regional Manager C'zar M. Sulaik as guide, the group visited Kitcharao Small Reservoir Irrigation Project (KSRIIP), the first of its kind in NIA-Caraga. It is located in the Municipality of Kitcharao, Province of Agusan del Norte. The 495 million project was programmed to restore 261.90 hectares to 5 Communal irrigation Systems and irrigate 218.52 hectares new area to benefit 280 farmers of the five barangays of Kitcharao. Aside from providing irrigation water, the project is projected to boost tourism in the locality. Administrator Padernal, in speaking with the IA leaders emphasized: "We should avoid cutting of trees to protect the environment and maintain watershed in the area." The leaders expressed their gratitude to him for making their dream come true. KSRIIP is scheduled to be inaugurated in early October of this year, according to the resident engineer, Engr. Luisito L. Cadeliña.

The group then proceeded to Umayam River Irrigation Project (URIP) in the municipality of Loreto, Province of Agusan del Sur, where they were welcomed by Project Manager Gregorio Y. Pang, Jr. The Administrator wanted to see that the agreed commitment of the contractor during the Administrator's visit on March 4, 2014 have been implemented. The 1.4B project targets to irrigate 6,729 hectares to provide sustainable development and increase agricultural production to 2,125 farming household. URIP draws water from Umayam River where the dam is located at Brgy. Waloe, Loreto. The Administrator's series of visit in URIP indicates that the project was closely monitored to make sure that only quality services will be given to its beneficiaries.

The group also visited Mayor Dario Otaza of Loreto, Agusan del Sur and informed him of the status of the on-going project. The group was overwhelmed by the support given by the LGU as they provide security in the project site to ensure the safety in the area. Mayor Otaza said, "I will give 100% support to the project as it will benefit our constituents and improve their living condition".

The on-site visit is a gesture that shows the seriousness of the management to fulfill its objective to deliver the kind of services the agency envisions for the country's development especially to the agriculture sector.

BBMP Coming into Reality

■ Eliseo V. Bitangcol, PRO, Region 3

"Ang Balog-Balog Multipurpose Project Phase 2 sa Tarlac, 1980s pa po plinano; ngayon, aprubado na ito, at nagsisimula na ang proseso ng bidding."

*- President Benigno Simeon Aquino III
Sixth SONA delivered on July 27, 2015.*

For almost 3 decades since the NEDA-ICC approved the implementation of the Balog-Balog Multi Purpose Project (BBMP) on February 3, 1988 the project is now in each and every Tarlaqueños fingertips.

The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 caused severe damage to irrigation facilities reverting close to 10,000 hectares irrigated areas to rainfed in the lahar affected areas of the province of Tarlac. Farming activities is merely once a year and solely relying on rainfall. Although the Balog-Balog Multi Purpose Project already started as early as 1988, frequent deferment on the construction was experienced due to tight financial consideration. After several years the project's Phase I (includes canalization, office construction and others) was successfully completed.

In May 19, 2015 His Excellency President Benigno S. Aquino III gave his full support to the implementation of the BBMP, a project which was initiated and started by his late president-mother Corazon C. Aquino, the NEDA finally confirmed and approved the Phase II of the project, giving a go signal for its immediate implementation.

The Balog-Balog Multi Purpose Project will be constructed along Bulsa River in the Municipality of San Jose province of Tarlac. The project involves the construction of earth fill dam as well as irrigation canals and appurtenant facilities.

continued on page 7



NIA websites to be “Drupalized”



■ Clarizze C. Toribio, PAIS - CO



The participants of the “Web Development Training on the Migration of Website Template using Drupal CMS” with the resource speaker Mr. Gerald Z. Villoriente, Madame Angelina P. Angeles, and Isidora M. Camaya of the Management Information Division.

The NIA Management Information Division in coordination with the Training and Career Development Section conducted “Web Development Training on the Migration of Websites to Government Website Template using Drupal CMS” last July 20-24, 2015 at the IEC Building.

This training is pursuant to Administrative Order (AO) No. 39 stating that all government agencies are mandated to migrate to the Government Web Hosting Service (GWHS) of the Department of Science and Technology – Information and Communications Technology Office (DOST-ICTO) and Unified Web Content Policy (UWCP) that will give all government websites a common look and feel.



Hmmm... Drupal?

Drupal is a free and open-source content-management framework written in PHP and distributed under the GNU General Public License. It is used as a back-end framework for at least 2.1% of all Web sites worldwide ranging from personal blogs to corporate, political, and government sites. It is also used for knowledge management and business collaboration. (wikipedia.com)

In layman's term, it is just one of the softwares used to create a website. Programmers and developers would say it's really cool and the platform is awesome. It provides possibilities, solidity, scalability, and safety.



Administrator Padernal also attended the training's opening program and expressed his support to improve the overall information technology of the agency.

Known for its tagline “Come for the software, stay for the community,” Drupal has a very dedicated and large community, mostly populated by developers. Together, they help improve the platform.

In fact, Mr. Gerald and the participants joined a forum and created a channel exclusive for NIA where they can communicate for a continuous learning. Mr. Voltz Jeturian, a representative from iGov also assisted the resource speaker.

Working as a Team...

The web development training was participated by selected staff from the MID and PAIS, Information Technology Officers and Public Relations Officers in the regional offices. Both have vital roles in website development. The regional PROs provide the data needed by the programmers. This team has been working together not only in the creation of the website but also in the PR related works.



Mr. Gerald Z. Villoriente served as the resource speaker of the training. He has credible background and specialized in different programming language, but fell in love with Drupal the most. He has been helping fellow programmers in the Drupal

At the end of the 5-day Training, the participants presented their initial output. Mr. Villoriente, Ms. Angelina P. Angeles, and Ms. Isidora M. Camaya gave comments and suggestions for the improvement of each website.

The new websites are expected to be launched before the end of 2015.~



The height of the Balog-Balog dam is 105.5 meters and length of 1,429.47 meters. Its water conveyor run to 60 km main canal and 248 km lateral canal. A total of 745 dam-and-reservoir affected families will be resettled under the projects Resettlement Program.

Once completed, the project will irrigate a total of 34,410 hectares of farmland in the municipalities of Paniqui, Pura, Ramos, Victoria, Gerona, San Jose, La Paz, Capas, Concepcion, and Tarlac City with 23,000 farmer beneficiaries. It will also

mitigate flooding in the low lying municipalities of Tarlac. Its reservoir's storage capacity of 570 MCM is potent in commercial inland fish production. It can also generate power of up to 43.5 megawatts. It is expected that the cropping intensity in the project area will increase from 124% to 200% thereby farm production and farm income level will likewise increase.

Due to NIA's regionalization program, and the project area is within the jurisdiction of Region 3, the Phase II of the BBMP (which involves the construction

of the high dam) is soon to start under the management of the Regional Manager of NIA Region 3 and concurrent BBMP Project Manager Josephine B. Salazar. Procurement processes was already being conducted at the National Irrigation Administration Central Office under the leadership of the energetic and enthusiastic NIA Administrator Florencio F. Padernal.

Balog-Balog Multi Purpose Project is once a dream but a few more sleep and it will soon turn into a reality. #

PIDP continues its Implementation as the Project draws to completion

■ Ma. Victoria J. Mamaril, PIDP

The 11th Implementation Support Mission of the World Bank (WB) for PIDP on May 18-29, 2015 observed a significant increment on the project's achievements in comparison with the 10th Review Mission in November 2014 for its physical (64% vs. 58% last mission) and financial (56% vs. 50% last mission) aspects.

Activities under Component 1 are almost complete. Rationalization Plan (RP) and Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) are 100 % and 86% completed, respectively. Of the 922 IAs organized covered by the 58 NISs under PIDP, 94% are already in



IMT Model Contracts. More importantly, the level of awareness of the IAs of their roles and responsibilities on the IMT Contracts has improved as perceived by the WB Task Team.

Under the Irrigation Infrastructure Development Component, the team recognized improvements in the implementation of rehabilitation works for the remaining Core-A NISs contributing to the remarkable achievement of 53.47%.

Compliance monitoring of the Contractors Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) was conducted and Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) of 12 NISs were submitted and approved by the World Bank. Project Affected Persons (PAPs) in Regions 2, 5 and 11 expressed satisfaction for the compensation package received from the project as reported by the review mission team.

continued on page 8



The World Bank has been recognizing the advocacy and compliance with Gender and Development (GAD) where equality in the roles and functions in terms of membership, leadership in the IA organization and access to irrigation services as monitored by the project.

The mission gave a satisfactory rating to the overall management and coordination of the project. Compliance with Fiduciary (Procurement and Financial Management) were achieved. Two additional studies

are under procurement process during the mission period, namely: Review of NIMF and the Ten-Year Irrigation Development Master Plan and NIA Corporate Plan 2016- 2025.

As of review mission period, the project's disbursement and utilization rate are 56.30% and 46.35%, respectively.

The Implementation Support Mission undertaken by the World Bank Task Team for PIDP is in collaboration with the

NIA-Central Office (CO), Regional Irrigation Offices (RIOs), Irrigation Management Offices (IMOs), officers and members of the Irrigators' Associations (IAs), Project Affected Persons (PAPs), officials and representatives of the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization (OPAFSAM), National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Department of Finance (DOF).

Davao Holds Administrative and Finance Mid-Year Review for CY 2015

■ **Portia Sandoval Angulo**
Industrial Relations Development
Officer A, HRD

Davao, the place where life is, hosted the second Administrative and Finance Conference for 2015. Twenty-eight (28) Managers of Administrative and/or Finance from the Central Office and the regional offices were in attendance in said event which was held in Seda Abreeza Hote I, Davao City on August 2-4, 2015.

The activity served as the Administrative and Finance Mid-Year Review for CY 2015 where relevant sector's issues and concerns were discussed with the guidance of Deputy Administrator Estrella E. Icasiano. Among the the topics



tackled during the session were the a) requirements of COA, DBM, DOF and other oversight agencies, b) status of revenue generation and expenditures as of June 30, 2015 and commitment to GCG; c) property accountability of retireables; d) updates on the rating scale of NIA SPMS; and, e) posting of vacant positions. Additionally, there were some participants who provided updates/developments on the

matters raised in the last Administrative and Finance Conference held on January 21-23, 2015 for the information of the body.

A simple send-off party was also organized for the retirement of one of their colleagues, Ms. Caridad K. Sison of Region 11. The honoree is a compulsory retiree who spent most of her life at NIA, serving the agency for 41 years.

Photo News



(L-R) PAFSAM Secretary Francis N. Pangilinan, Dr. Florencio F. Padernal, PCA Administrator Romulo N. Arancon, Jr., DPWH Secretary Rogelio L. Singson after the Memorandum of Agreement Signing for the Convergence and Integration on the use of Coconut Coir between OPAFSAM, DPWH, NIA and PCA on July 14, 2015 at the NIA Board Room.



Engr. Angelito S. Miguel, BANE IMO manager, presented AMRIS actions on El Niño during press conference held at NWRB Conference Room on July 30, 2015



Deputy Administrator Estrella E. Icasiano (in blue cardigan) with PAIS Manager Pilipina P. Bermudez, Dr. Catherine Binag, Engr. Othello Razon, and GSD Manager Filipinas Versoza are in a conversation during the Shake Drill 2015 at the NIA grounds as NIAEASP representative Totie Sahagun attentively listens.



Members of Panel (L-R) PAIS Manager Pilipina P. Bermudez, Region 3 Manager Josephine B. Salazar, NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr., MWSS Senior Deputy Administrator Nathaniel Santos, PAGASA Senior Weather Specialist Anthony Lucero, Maynilad Water Supply Operations Head Ronald Padua, and Manila Water Spokesperson Mr. N. Eric T. Sevilla Jr. during a press con on El Niño at the NWRB Conference Room.



All NIA officials, employees, and NIA building tenants participated in the Metro Manila Shake Drill at exactly 10:30AM on July 30, 2015 and converged at the NIA grounds. The drill aims to increase people's awareness on what to do during earthquake.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

NIA RO1 Launches ARISEP

■ Oscar Navata, PRO-NIA RO1

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) formally launched the Agno River Irrigation System Extension Project (ARISEP), a successor to the now defunct Agno River Irrigation Improvement Project (ARIIP) during a simple rite held on August 6, 2015 at the IEC Bldg. Convention Hall, NIA Central Office, Edsa, Quezon City. With principal office located at Tomana East, Rosales, Pangasinan, the ARISEP which has a budget of 2.629 B Php aims to increase the agricultural yield and cropping intensity of rice crop in the province. With a service area of 12,894 hectares, ARISEP will benefit some 10,559 farmers in the 6th district of Pangasinan in the next two and a half years beginning 2015.

Presidential Adviser on Food Security and Agriculture Modernization Francis Pangilinan and NIA Administrator Florencio Padernal graced the affair which was attended by Representative of 6th district of Pangasinan Marlyn Primicias – Agabas. Meanwhile, NIA has designated its Region I Director, Engr. John N. Celeste as the concurrent Project Manager who vowed to strictly implement the rules and procedures pertaining to project biddings under the ARISEP.

It is envisioned that when the ARISEP is completed, some 12,894 families in Eastern Pangasinan particularly those who reside from the municipalities of Natividad, San Nicolas, San Quintin, Sta. Maria, Tayug, Balungao, Umingan, and Rosales including that in nearby districts will be enormously benefited from the San Roque dam in San Manuel, Pangasinan which will be rehabilitated through the ARISEP.



Hon. Francis N. Pangilinan, Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization, ARISEP launching guest speaker.



Administrator Florencio F. Padernal delivering his speech.

Engr. Celeste briefs OPAFSAM Secretary Kiko Pangilinan on the ARISEP scale model. Looking on are NIA Administrator Padernal and ARISEP Asst. Project Manager Ceferino Sta. Ana.





Partnership Built in Water

■ Emma S. Cruz, CRC-B - NIA-Region 3

As co-partners in irrigation development and management of irrigation systems, part of NIA's continued support and assistance to Irrigators Associations (IAs) is facilitating interfacing and linkages with private and government offices providing support services and related programs meant to uplift the welfare and economic condition of farmers.

The annual NIA-IA Congress that serves this purpose was held on August 27, 2015 at the College of the Holy Spirit Gym at San Sebastian, Tarlac City with the most appropriate theme that best describes this partnership: "NIA at Magsasaka, Magkabalikat Tungo sa Aning Masagana".

Our Lady Boss, Regional Manager Josephine B. Salazar spearheaded the preparation and conduct of this undertaking which proved to be a success judging from the congratulatory note of Administrator Padernal and I quote: *"Much thanks to your Team! Well done. Cheers!"*

What exactly happened? About 803 participants and guests came and filled the Holy Spirit Gym in a sea of cream colored t-shirt specially worn by everyone for the occasion.

Engr. Salazar emphasized that the NIA-IA Congress is the right forum to reach as much number of farmers and Irrigators Associations for wide info dissemination of current government programs, plans, and support services. Mr Anthony Lucero from PAGASA is specially invited to give first hand information about the high probability occurrence of El Niño that will hit most parts of Region 3.

DA Regional Director Andrew B. Villacorta lined up support services program to mitigate the ill effect of El Niño, notable of which are distribution of STW's, livelihood programs, provision for High Value Crops, and Micro Financing.

NIA EOD Manager Virgilio J. Ilao presented the list of projects for 2015 and 2016 by province not only for irrigation purpose but for local employment generation as labor force for construction. It would mean alternative source of income for farmers. He also discussed the mitigating measures and strategies to address the impending calamity.

RCIA President Daniel A. Villanueva, the father of all Irrigators in Region 3, is forever grateful to Secretary Pangilinan, Administrator Padernal, Congresswoman Yap, and Regional Manager Salazar for sharing time with them and prioritizing IAs in their programs.

Administrator Florencio F. Padernal gave assurance and full support to the priority programs of Region 3 mentioning Bustos, Bulo, Angat and BBMP as the flagship programs that very soon will start implementation.



Secretary Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan endears everyone as he informed that his father is from Pampanga and his mother is from Nueva Ecija, a true blue "Kababayan". A farmer himself, he shared high aspiration for Filipino farmers to be at par with farmers of other nations who have been successful in this field. His foresight is exact and scientific. The reason why the rehabilitation of Angat and Bustos Dam is his priority for safety, environmental, and economic reasons.

Out of goodwill, Dr. Villacorta of DA committed 2 units of Handtractor with complete accessories in the amount of P 130,000.00 each with only 15% equity payment. IDD Manager. Bayani P. Ofrecio of Central IDD picked the 2 lucky winners not in the name of farmer participant but in the name of the IA. And the winners are: Lucong CIS IA of Tarlac and Ted-Ted ti Ling-it IA of Nueva Ecija.

The NIA-IA Congress keeps and sustains harmonious relationship among the key players in agricultural development.



IRPEP and Loog IA: *Partners in Women Empowerment*

■ Edita V. Enderes, IDS Chief and Karen C. Medes, Research Assistant NIA - Region 8



The Loog Irrigators Association is one of the IAs under the communal irrigation systems (CIS) of Region 8. It is based in Brgy. Loog, Basey, in the 2nd district of Western Samar, known as one of the barangays in the Golden River. Surrounded by forests and caves. Basey has great potential to be a top tourist attraction. Basey can be reached by land as it is approximately 12 kilometers away from the town proper or by sea, a 3-hour boat ride from Tacloban City. More than 85% of the population consider farming as their means of livelihood.

The Loog IA

The Loog IA has a 65-hectare service area, 58 hectares of which are devoted to irrigated rice. It was organized in 1982 and was registered with SEC in 1983. It has 24 pioneer members with nine officers managing the organization. For more than two decades, the IA was considered dormant, becoming active only during implementation of projects but there was no proper turnover of responsibilities from one set of IA officers to the next. Based on a 2010 assessment, the IA had 63 members, mostly inactive. Membership was low, women participation was lacking. In fact, no female officer has ever been elected for 22 years. It was then believed that IA activities were just for males and will be more effective if run by them. Most members of the IA did not participate in IA affairs.

The construction of a dam and earth canals in Loog started in 1987 and was completed the following years. However, the facility was damaged in 1991 and rehabilitated in 1995 and, the Loog CIS subsequently was made operational. The IA did not function as expected and, because of this, the Loog IA was re-organized in 2006 under close supervision of NIA.

IRPEP intervention

In 2012, the Loog IA became a beneficiary of the Irrigated Rice Productivity Enhancement Project (IRPEP), which was funded by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Union (EU), and the Philippine Government with counterpart funds from the local government unit of Basey, Samar and the Loog IA. The rehabilitation of the dam was completed in 2012. This resulted in improved operation and maintenance of the system. The total irrigated area increased with the increase in cropping intensity to 200% –farmers are now able to plant twice a year instead of the previous one-crop growing period.

The IA and the whole community of Loog benefited from IRPEP assistance: the irrigation system was rehabilitated from 2011-2012, an office and a warehouse were constructed in 2012 and the IA has been strengthened since 2011. The strengthening and capability-building trainings focused on topics such as system management training, strategic planning and policy formulation, basic leadership, enterprise development, financial management, simplified bookkeeping and accounting, values formation and pre-membership education.

IRPEP adopted a holistic approach in uplifting the quality of life of farmers with the collaboration of the different government agencies involved in agricultural development. NIA's rehabilitation of irrigation facilities ensured adequate and timely delivery of irrigation water. The Department of Agriculture (DA) provided seeds, fertilizers, agro-chemicals and new technologies. DA also introduced PalayCheck, a dynamic rice crop management system that presents the best key technology and management practices as Key Checks; compares farmer practices with best practices; and facilitates learning through farmer group discussions to sustain improvement in productivity, profitability, and environment safety. On top of this, Agricultural Training Institute set up a Farmers' Field School while the National Food Authority bought farmers' produce at a higher price.

The women in Loog recognized their own strength, asserting

that they can do what men can. The women now participate in irrigated rice farming activities—from planting to harvesting—as well as in the activities of the IA. With IRPEP, women participation in meetings and trainings was evident; they later decided to become members just like their husbands. The learning curve shown by the trained women encouraged other women to join the IA. It came to a point that attendance in IA activities was mostly dominated by women. Their involvement in IA increased their awareness of their association's operation and maintenance activities. With the entry of IRPEP in Loog, membership increased from 60 to 93 members. Consequently, women membership increased from 12 in 2011 to 40 in 2014. Of 25 sector leaders, 13 were women and of nine IA officers, two were females.

The turning point

On November 8, 2013, super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) hit Leyte and Samar. It devastated 473 hectares in Western Samar, 60 hectares of which were under the Loog CIS. The life-threatening wind and flash floods devastated their farm land including the standing crop due for harvest. Moreover, coconut trees were wiped out putting their basic source of income at risk. Houses were destroyed and everything in them. The area was rendered impassable due to landslides and strong river currents. The major means of transportation ("habal-habal", a single motorcycle commonly used in inaccessible area and the "bangka", small boats that use paddles) were rendered useless. Because the area was isolated, the barangay experienced food scarcity for 2 months.

The calamity tested the fortitude and resiliency of Loog farmers. Though the government and NGOs extended assistance, there





still problems related to insufficiency and unequal distribution of goods. The Irrigators' Development Officer (IDO) called up a meeting and majority of the IA members attended. Facing months of hunger, they articulated their problems and raised concerns about the need to find other sources of income. Since the IA has cash reserves from their members' savings operation, they agreed to provide loan assistance to IA members who want to start a business. Some opened "sari-sari" stores; others went into mat weaving. Some members were assisted in buying farm inputs for the next cropping.

Fortunately, ABS-CBN sponsored livelihood programs to areas devastated by Yolanda. Brgy. Loog was chosen as one of the recipients. Since most of the women in Loog are interested to go back to the traditional mat weaving and considering that the raw materials needed are within their community, it was agreed the women form a group or organization to sustain their livelihood efforts. Most of the women interviewed are members of the IA, and they brought the matter up to the IA. In their general assembly, the IA allowed the use of their bodega as the working area. The ABS-CBN gave a P10,000 grant for the purchase of raw materials and one sewing machine.

The women then realized that this is the most opportune time to focus on livelihood while the men are still rehabilitating the irrigation facilities. Armed with the knowledge they got from IRPEP's GBEST training program, they organized the Loog Tikog Workers Association in March 2014 and had it registered a month after. A woman, the wife of the IA auditor, headed the association. There were 42 IA women members and the wives of the male members also joined. As IA's support of the association, it helped finance the acquisition of raw materials, specifically the Tikog leaves.

(Tikog [*Fimbristylis globulosa*] grows in swampy areas; it has strong, fibrous, and shiny elongated stems, perfect for mats, hats, wall decorations, placemats, bags, and slippers.)

Currently, the organization maintains their own tikog and buri plantations to ensure a steady supply of raw materials. The members were able to attend seminars on weaving techniques and sewing of banig and other products made of tikog. This livelihood program provided sustainable income to Loog women, which enabled them to meet the basic needs of their family. Mat weaving continued to flourish in Loog. The IA members now produce intricate colorful banigs that command higher prices. The knowledge they have obtained from the training and from engaging in IA was put to good use in the Loog Tikog Workers Association. Linkages were developed and it led to the continuity of their operation. The mat weaving industry in Basey flourished.

Since the Loog Tikog Workers Association has already established linkages with the LGU, the Department of Tourism, and other NGOs, their enterprise became more profitable. But because they do not weave mats all the time, the female members help their husbands or their IA members in the rehabilitation of the irrigation facility. This development caught the attention of project staff. In fact, the gender focus in the IRPEP implementation of Loog IA was rated highly satisfactory by the IFAD Mission. This high rating was the outcome of the successful conduct of the Gender Based Effectiveness Skills Training (GBEST) and the Values Formation Training conducted thereat. There was awareness and a quick change in mindset. Women membership increased and there was a corresponding increase in participation in rehabilitation efforts, previously the domain of male members.

Since the male members supported the women in their mat weaving endeavor, the women, in return, got involved in collecting, hauling, and stock piling of gravel to be used in the repair of the irrigation system. Some women helped in canal clearing, by cutting grass or by preparing food. In this system, women lessen the heavy work of men. The more enterprising women earn income by selling snacks to laborers. After the restoration of the irrigation facilities, both husband and wife engage in farming activities. But the women still weave in their leisure time.

The international NGO the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) Philippines, took notice of the reciprocity of men and women of Loog IA in terms of labor. The Loog IA received a collapsible dryer from the LGU and a rice mill from CARE Philippines. Their plan to mill rice and sell it to the Loog community and to the neighboring municipality of Basey has been realized. Meanwhile, the Loog Tikog Workers Association was given livelihood assistance in the amount of P147 thousand of which, P40 thousand used to buy a flattening machine and the P107 thousand is set aside for raw materials. This will greatly contribute to the success of their mat weaving enterprise.

Lessons learned

Women play significant roles in the family and in farming. The resiliency of women gave rise to mat weaving, a necessary "life saver" after a disaster. The IA considers women as effective partners of men in any economic activity and, as such, are regarded indispensable in the IA's quest for a better quality of life for their members.



The Anatomy of a Wallflower: My story as a NIA employee

■ Danielle Parlan-Pijuan, PRO, NIA Region VI

I am but a droplet of water in the ocean, easily drowning, easily lost in tumultuous waves.

That is who I am. I can walk in a crowded room and go unnoticed. Fortunately, that's how I always wanted myself to be. A recluse, which is an unlikely behaviour for someone in the Public Relations sphere. I am not a "people" person. I am not anti-social but being in a crowd often makes me feel lost and alone. As a matter of fact, I don't want to be in a crowd at all. So, you might wonder, how an unsociable person like me could survive in a profession that requires a lot of social interaction.

Before I entered the realm of public service through NIA, I didn't have any experience working in a real office environment. In fact, working for a government agency was something that never crossed even my wildest imagination as an adult. A person like me who only knew the pages of my books and the wonders of poetry could easily drown in that ocean. Like a fish that only knew water as its world, land was an alien planet for me,

a remote and isolated place without air, without life. At least, that's how I perceived it to be. But NIA, its personnel, principles, and goals gave me a different perspective on various things.

One year and ten months later, I am here, writing this story about my journey on becoming the person I am today, as a personnel of NIA, sharing its ideals and goals.

Having graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree on Literature, it was not easy to find a job that suits my passion. My husband, a Philosophy graduate, is as weird as myself. He has a penchant for poetry and intelligent discussions, and together, we are alone. We loved being alone in our own familiar world and getting out of our comfort zones was not at all easy. But we had kids to feed and send to school, and so, although we wanted to pursue our passion for teaching and writing, we found ourselves doing jobs that are more economically feasible than the meagre salaries we would have received as college instructors.

About two years ago, I was enjoying my work as a content writer and website quality controller for an Australian-based company that offered web design and search engine optimization services to companies within and around Australia. Working at home was something a young mother with two toddlers like me totally enjoyed.

Who doesn't want a job that lets you work in your pyjamas, snuggle with your kids in bed, take as much breaks as you want, sleep when you feel sleepy, play with your kids, while helping them learn their ABCs and 123s? Not only was the pay good (not to mention no tax deductions), I got to work full time and be with my family at the same time.

Not long afterwards, waking up to caress the familiar keys of my computer became an arduous routine that I have to keep up with. That's when I realized that although I was contented and happy being with my kids and having an almost perfect job, I was missing something. Life.

I loved my isolation. I loved reading and spilling my heart on paper, like blood, like water, waiting for the air to drink it. Many, even myself, thought that my life was already perfect, something any mother like myself could only ask for. But there is life outside my own perfectly carved world. There is life beyond my desk.

When I was young, my Aunt who worked in NIA used to bring me and my sister to her office for a visit or to accompany her during her weekend overtimes. I remember the smell of paper piled on my Aunt's desk, the sound of typewriters clicking away in every table, the smile on every person's face when they see us, exclaiming "Oh! Is this Lili already? She's grown so fast!" and I would shyly smile back, wishing I would dissolve in an instant. I remember when I and my sister used to fight over her swivel chair. My sister would say, "When I grow up, I will sit on this chair." I would disagree with her, of course, and say I'd want to be exactly like my Aunt when I grow up and inherit her chair. And guess who actually did?

At first, it was scary. I didn't know how to be with people, and worse, I didn't know how to get along with them. Not even the book of Leil Lowndes "How to Talk to Anyone" helped me in my goal to be socially comfortable. I defy tradition. I am not a fan of conventionalism and being in an agency, which is set by rules, I somehow found myself trapped and not being able to be myself.

I didn't have a lot of friends in my age group. They are too different from me. I longed to have someone to talk to about my ideas, the things I read, the movies I watched,

my discoveries about myself, God, and basically just about anything that interests me. My wavelength didn't match with those of the other young employees my age.

Work replaced my usual everyday musings about the world. As a Public Relations Officer, I was exposed to the real world. Before, I spent my days researching and writing articles for foreign companies at home, here, I am tasked to write office memoranda, transmittals, facilitate production of our regional newsletter, attend and document conferences and significant events, and do other tasks that require my skills and expertise.

Being used to work by myself, it was a struggle to work with different people with different attitudes. With NIA, I learned to talk with various people, empathize with our former beneficiaries, share the inhibitions of the project affected families, stand up for the ideals of our agency, and defend our integrity.

For me to be effective in my undertakings, I had to let go of my own familiar world. NIA has allowed me to carry out tasks, which I thought I wouldn't be able to do. It has allowed me to bring out the best in myself and not be afraid to face the challenges of public service through information and public relations. It has given me the opportunity to awaken the sleeping facets of my inner self.

I slowly saw myself changing and unfolding. From an introverted and socially awkward young woman to a gregarious and sometimes sarcastic lady, I learned to try on different shoes. They don't define me but rather, I give definition to those shoes I wear. In government service, our main focus shouldn't be ourselves but the common good. It is a challenge to keep up with the changing world filled with people who are filled with their own shrouded opinions and self-determined philosophies.

Change, cliché as it is, is the only constant thing in this world. As my husband puts it, we only change to remain the same. It has been a constant rediscovery, changing to change back, but only better. NIA has provided me with opportunities to be more human as I ever was and experience changes I never thought I would turn into.

We are all just tiny drops of water in this vast ocean. However inconspicuous our efforts are, as long as we do our part effectively, we have to remember that it is us who make up this ocean. #

(Written during the News, Editorial, and Feature Writing Workshop in Cebu last May 2014.)

Health & Wellness

Bakit **PAYAT** pero **MALAKAS** kumain? Bakit **MATABA** pero **MAHINA** kumain?



1. Isang factor sa pagiging payat o mataba ay ang iyong metabolism o yung galaw ng katawan. Kapag bata ka pa (edad 30 pababa) mabilis pa ang iyong metabolism at hindi ka gaano tataba. Pero pag lampas edad 40, mabilis nang tumaba at lumaki ang bilbil.

2. Ang regular na ehersisyo ay nagpapapayat din. Kapag hindi ka nag-papawis sa exercise at lagi lang nakaupo, ay mas mabilis kang tumaba. Dapat ay magalaw tayo sa buong araw. Umakyat ng hagdanan. Mag-lakad-lakad sa trabaho para makabawas sa timbang.

3. Bawasan ang pag-inom ng soft drinks, juice at iced tea. Ito ay nakakataba. Ang isang soft drinks o iced tea ay katumas na ng kalahating platong kanin. Dahan-dahan din sa pagkain ng prutas tulad ng mangga at ubas dahil matamis ito at nakatataba din. Mansanas at saging ang piliin.

4. May epekto din ang lahi (o genetics) sa ating timbang. Namamana din natin mula sa ating magulang ang hugis ng ating katawan at mukha. Kapag mabilog ang mukha o malaki ang braso at binti ng magulang, ay puwede din mamana ito ng mga anak.

5. May mga sakit na nakaka-apekto sa ating timbang. Halimbawa, ang mga taong hyperthyroid ay mas pumapayat. Ang mga taong naoperahan sa gallbladder ay mas tumataba. Kapag stressed ka, puwede kang tumaba (dahil kain ng kain) o pumayat (walang ganang kumain).

Tandaan: Ang lahi, ehersisyo, pagkain at sakit ay ilan sa mga factors na puwedeng maka-apekto sa iyong timbang.

Source: Cardiologist & Internist (Dr Willie Ong- Cardiologist & Internist Health Tips, July 16 & 17, 2015, FB Page)

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