



International

REGIONAL OFFICE SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Solidarity *in* Focus

*Magazine for AWO International Southeast Asia's
Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation Programs*



People, at the Heart of Community

Twelve of our local partner organizations feature individuals and groups making waves in their own communities by taking action on issues close to them and being an inspiration to others.

Editorial Note

AWO International firmly believes that change starts at the local level, it is imperative that we chose the theme of “the I in Community”. We can say with confidence that the stories found between the front and back-covers of this magazine highlight people in the communities as catalysts of change.

Our aim with this magazine issue is to inspire you with real-life tales of those whose lives have been changed for the better. The human dimension and personal touch are hard to miss. As you turn the pages, discover the positive transformations found in the examples of former migrant workers, mostly women who decided to work overseas out of necessity, faced abuse and maltreatment, and experienced uncertainties upon return in their communities, but finding ways to strive for meaningful lives; and inspiring accounts of individuals pressing forward in life and persevering to help their community recover from disasters and become more resilient despite the cards they have been dealt with. All these are thanks to the generous funding and unwavering support of Germany’s Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH), and donations to AWO International e.V.

Grassroots achievements and success stories can be easily overlooked in favor of grander and over-

arching narratives. Usually reduced to a sub-plot, or illustrated as a case example, or found as a quote somewhere in the pages of project reports and publications. Our magazine “Solidarity in Focus” hopes to shine a brighter spotlight on these very stories, human-interest stories.

On a final note, it is with great pleasure that we publicly share the second issue of “Solidarity in Focus”. I would also like to thank everyone, especially our partner organizations for their contributions to this issue, and the regional office colleagues for technical and creative input, and coordination in delivering this valuable magazine. As our work continues, we will strive to provide a glimpse of how the sustained efforts of the communities have touched the lives of many – across region and cultures – presenting accounts of all that community-led, and people-centered initiatives can achieve.

Happy reading!



Stefan Bepler,
Regional Director



Table of Contents

01	Table of Contents	25 – 27	Empowering Migrant Workers: Reflections on the impact of a regional case conference MFA / PHILIPPINES, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA
02 – 04	AWO International Fact Sheet		
05 – 06	AWO International Southeast Asia Milestones	28 – 30	Recentering the Concept of “People-Centered” in ASEAN: Migrant workers must be included MIGRANT CARE / INDONESIA, MALAYSIA
07 – 42	Feature Articles		
07 – 09	Migrant Workers Find an Advocate from Among their Own ADBMI FOUNDATION / INDONESIA	31 – 33	Channels of Hope: Social structures championing change MMCEAI / PHILIPPINES
10 – 12	Identity Change: The struggle for success of a Bangsamoro Overseas Filipino Worker BLAS F. OPLE POLICY CENTER AND TRAINING INSTITUTE / PHILIPPINES	34 – 36	Overcoming Obstacles: How I fought to make my voice heard in the community OND HESED / PHILIPPINES
13 – 15	Women Leaders Advancing Disaster Resilience CONCERN / PHILIPPINES	37 – 39	From Victims to Victors: How survivors of trafficking became thriving entrepreneurs PPK / INDONESIA
16 – 18	The Hands that Strip Fibers and Weave Success ECOWEB / PHILIPPINES	40 – 42	Bridging Differences and Nurturing a Culture of Resilience Culture in Cianjur YEU / INDONESIA
19 – 21	From Despair to Resilience: Nora’s inspiring journey of hope HOPE WORLDWIDE PHILIPPINES / PHILIPPINES	43 – 44	Snapshots
22 – 24	Activism for Social Change: Village development and strengthening children’s education quality in Ngendut and Sumberagung INFEST / INDONESIA, MALAYSIA		

Together for a Just World



International

AWO International was founded in 1998 as a professional association for development cooperation and humanitarian action within the framework of the German welfare organization "Arbeiterwohlfahrt" (AWO) or workers welfare. AWO International draws on the expertise and vast experience of AWO in Germany. In the past 100 years, AWO has been an integral part of the German welfare state. The head office is in Berlin, Germany and has operations in Central America, South Asia, East Africa, and here in Southeast Asia. It also supports emergency aid in Ukraine and the Middle East as well as the Civilian Sea Rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.

In close cooperation with local non-governmental organizations, AWO International is working to ensure that marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society can sustainably improve their living conditions. In the event of disasters and crisis situations, AWO International is engaged in humanitarian relief and reconstruction.



FIGHTING POVERTY AND STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

As part of its development cooperation, its projects aim to improve the social participation of disadvantaged groups such as children and adolescents, women, migrants, indigenous people, the elderly, and sick people. We support people to develop their own life perspectives and gain access to necessary resources and services. The aim is to strengthen the social structures or community-based organizations, in which people act at different levels so that they actively participate in political and social processes. In our work, we proceed from a human rights approach.

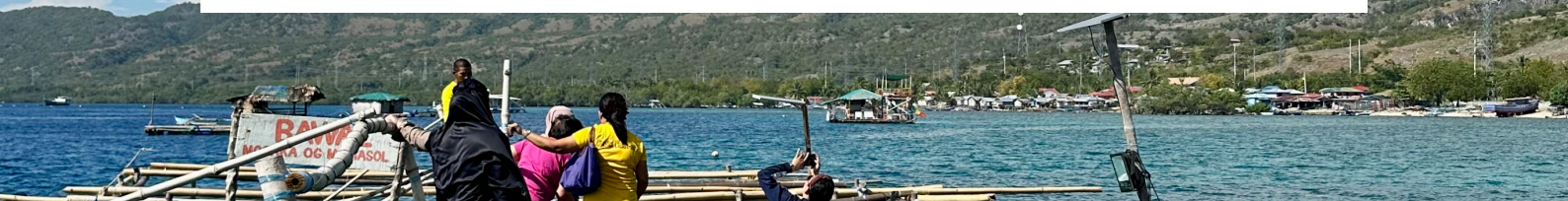


HUMANITARIAN ACTION

AWO International is involved in humanitarian relief and reconstruction. In cooperation with local partner organizations, we provide fast and effective help for the affected population. This includes measures such as the provision of food, shelter and water, as well as hygiene promotion. We promote reconstruction projects and are involved in disaster risk reduction. Our aim is to contribute to the restoration of everyday civilian life in disaster and crisis areas. AWO International is a member of Aktion Deutschland Hilft e.V., the alliance of German relief organizations, which join forces in the event of a catastrophe in order to provide assistance quickly and effectively.

Our Work in Southeast Asia

From 2021 to 2023, we focused on humanitarian aid, combating the trafficking of people and promoting safe migration. During this period, we carried out 9 development projects and 4 humanitarian action projects, worked with 13 partners, and directly reached out to 31,635 people.



HUMANITARIAN AID

Country	NGO Partner	Project	Direct Beneficiaries as of November 2023
Indonesia	YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU)	Rehabilitation and Disaster Risk Reduction in Cianjur District, West Java (March 2023 - January 2024)	3,157
Philippines	Center for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation, Inc. (CONCERN)	Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation in Albay (November 2022 - October 2024)	1,896 as of October 2023
	Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefit, Inc. (ECOWEB)	Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation in the Municipality of Sibagat, Agusan del Sur (November 2022 - April 2026)	5,588
	HOPE worldwide Philippines	Emergency Response to Typhoon Rai (Odette) in the Municipality of Sogod, Southern Leyte (December 2021 - May 2022)	6,290

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

<i>Country</i>	<i>NGO Partner</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Direct Beneficiaries from 2021-2023</i>
Indonesia	Lembaga Advokasi Buruh Migran Indonesia (ADBMI)	Promoting safe migration and combating human trafficking from the local to the district level	2,636
	Perkumpulan Panca Karsa (PPK)		776
Indonesia, Malaysia	Institute for Education Development, Social, Religious, and Cultural Studies (INFEST)	Promoting safe migration and combating human trafficking locally and in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	1,303
	Migrant CARE		1,805
Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines	Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)		126
Philippines	Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute	Promoting safe migration and combating human trafficking in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)	257 (only for 2021-2022)
	Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA)	Promoting safe migration at the local level across multiple provinces in the Philippines	937
	Mindanao Migrant Center for Empowering Actions (MMCEAI)	Promoting safe migration at the local level in Davao and at the regional level across Mindanao	4,017
	OND Hesed Foundation	Combating human trafficking in fishing communities in General Santos City and Sarangani Province	2,847

These efforts will continue beyond 2023.

At AWO, we support every person to successfully manage their individual everyday lives, to demand their rights and be treated fairly. This involves helping people help themselves through empowerment and giving encouragement, as our role is always to make it easier for disadvantaged persons to join or rejoin society, or to ensure that they can take part in everyday life with autonomy and dignity.

Milestones

1919

AWO in Germany was founded on the initiative of Marie Juchacz. Since then, it has been committed to fighting for justice, solidarity, and participation.



*“The more good we do, the better the world will be” /
“Je mehr gute Taten wir zusammenbringen, umso besser wird die Welt”*

– MARIE JUCHACZ, FOUNDER OF AWO

Link to AWO
History Video:



1986

AWO Germany began supporting projects in the Philippines:

▼ **1987-1996**

Preventive and Curative Health Care for Industrial Workers, Workplace Safety and Accident Prevention Programs, Strengthening of Workers' Organizations, with Healthdev Institute/HDI

▼ **1992-1998**

Organizational Strengthening of Farmers' Organizations, Promotion of Agricultural Development by Increasing Production and Marketing, with PAKISAMA/PAK

▼ **1996-1998**

Establishment of an Enterprise for the Processing of Food for Emergencies and Disaster Relief, Strengthening of Rural Cooperatives, Introduction of Environmentally Friendly Land Use Systems, with Nutrition and Livelihood Center Inc.

1998

AWO International was officially established.

2006

AWO International set up a regional office for Southeast Asia in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and officially began supporting projects there and in the Philippines.

2016

AWO International Southeast Asia moved from Indonesia to Manila, Philippines.



2019

AWO in Germany celebrated 100 years since its establishment. It stands as one of the oldest charities in Germany.

Link to AWO @ 100 years brochure:



2014 – 2017

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's Social Structure Fund (BMZ-SSF) supported Development Cooperation programs on the Protection of Women and Children / Empowerment of Women and Children.

2018

A new program cycle on Safe Migration and Anti-Human Trafficking starts for BMZ-SSF Development Cooperation projects.

2018-2019

AWO International responded to the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Lombok, Indonesia. Two (2) disaster response projects and one (1) recovery project were implemented.

A disaster preparedness project improving the resilience of families in flood-prone communities in Pampanga, Philippines was implemented.

A disaster preparedness and livelihood resiliency project for Typhoon Vinta-affected communities in Lanao del Norte, Philippines was implemented.

2019 – 2021

A disaster risk reduction (DRR) project for Typhoon Vinta-affected communities in Lanao del Norte, Philippines, which includes COVID-19 interventions, was implemented.

2020 – 2021

A recovery-DRR project for the Lombok earthquake-affected communities, including COVID-19 interventions, was implemented.

AWO International responded to Typhoon Goni in Albay, Philippines. A disaster response project, including DRR, was implemented.

2021

The Regional Project on Safe Migration and Anti-Human Trafficking continues for a second phase, which will run until 2023.

In December, AWO International initiated the response project to Typhoon Rai (Odette) in Southern Leyte, Philippines.

2022

Two (2) disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation projects started at the end of the year. One is funded by the BMZ via Engagement Global (BENGO), which will run until 2026.

2023

AWO International supported the affected population of the 5.6 magnitude earthquake in Cianjur District, West Java, Indonesia, through a rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction project.

Migrant Workers Find an Advocate from Among their Own

Written by: Nendi Wahyu Imansah, Chairperson, Lembaga Sosial Desa (LSD)
(Village Social Institution) in Anjani Village

I am Nendi and this is my story. Out of extreme necessity, I took a chance by working abroad. Returning home to my village after an unpleasant stint as a migrant worker, I am now putting my first-hand experience and understanding of migrant worker issues to use as the chair of a village social institution. Read on to know more about how this organization empowers migrant workers by way of their business and environmental ventures.



MY NAME IS NENDI WAHYU IMANSAH. I was born in Anjani village in East Lombok in 1994, the fourth of seven children. My family and I had lived a happy and comfortable life, until my father passed away in 2007.

In the years after his death, my family's economic condition continued to decline because his pension wasn't enough to meet our needs. After I finished Senior High School, I decided to postpone my college studies in favor of working to support my family. I opted to go abroad in 2012 to find work, harvesting palms in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

As a migrant worker there, I was exposed to difficult and dangerous conditions. Along with 5 other people, we were required to pick at least 5 tons of palm fruit a day. It was backbreaking work, especially for someone like me who had never done hard manual labor before. Also, we rarely saw our employer and we didn't speak the same language. I no longer wanted to endure such poor treatment,

and it made me more determined to continue my education. After working there for two years, I packed my bags and returned home. With only IDR 200,000 (USD 13) remaining in my wallet, I registered in a private university in East Lombok in 2015. A month later, I was proudly wearing my blue student uniform. Being around my smart and well-spoken peers motivated me to improve myself to be able to catch up with them. Also, my classes and extracurricular activities gradually formed my character.

In January 2018, ADBMI came to Anjani village to share about their advocacy and recruit local partners (volunteers) that will help run their project in partnership with AWO International on strengthening the protection of and empowering Indonesian Migrant Workers in East Lombok. My involvement in the project's early activities awakened my spirit of community service. I could relate to it because of my past experience. It is true that migrant workers are often isolated and never mentioned in village policy-making meetings.



Nendy and fellow members of LSD Anjani pose with the village head for a group photo. (Source: ADBMI Foundation)

I took part in a village meeting attended by regional heads, the village government, as well as civil society representatives to form the Anjani Village Social Institution (Lembaga Sosial Desa / LSD).¹ That day, I was also elected as its chair.

My vision for the LSD in the next five years

One of my most important tasks as the chair of the LSD was to introduce it to the community as the only village institution that focuses on migrant worker issues. I also promoted the LSD to youth organizations to raise their members' awareness of these issues – including getting them to participate in aid distribution programs for the families of disabled and elderly former migrant workers and the orphaned children of deceased migrant workers. I advocated for the implementation of a village regulation protecting the rights of Indonesian migrant workers by monitoring their status throughout the entire recruitment process. I got to establish networks within the government and non-governmental organization circles for valuable collaboration and information sharing. And of course, I kept the organization running smoothly by performing administrative tasks.

The members of the Anjani LSD want to become stronger in advocacy and awareness campaigns, as

well as more economically independent. This way, the LSD can grow into a sustainable institution, relevant to the times, tough in fighting for the rights of migrant workers, and capable of empowering the community.

To achieve this, all LSD members have to be trained and capacitated in all aspects of advocacy. The organization will build information and education centers for a range of fields to cater to the needs of migrant workers. Lastly, the LSD also plans to put up several sustainable local businesses to raise funds.

Migrant workers get into business ventures

It started with a desire to improve the social and economic conditions of the community by tapping its existing potential opportunities. The LSD proposed the creation of a business group that could become a learning space in the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises and whose knowledge could later be passed on to the community, especially migrant workers and their families seeking to invest remittances in business.

The UM (Migrant Business) business group in the form of a micro shop was subsequently formed by the Anjani LSD in October 2021 with an initial capital of IDR 5 million. The initial concept was to sell soft drinks in the tourist area of Anjani village. On its opening

“
***I also promoted
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– NENDI

¹ LSDs are established in accordance with the regulations set by the regional governments in Indonesia. Their main function is more on social work and supporting the village government's duties and functions.

day, the shop's sales amounted to over IDR 300,000 – not bad for a new business.

Now in its third year, the business opened three more street food branches around Anjani village and hired more employees, all of whom are family members of migrant workers. We buy the raw materials of the products we sell from shops owned



After being capacitated under ADBMI's project with AWO International, Nendy now also helps facilitate workshops and trainings. (Source: ADBMI Foundation)

by former migrant workers, thereby boosting the economy of this sector.

In October 2022, the village government entrusted to the LSD a waste processing facility that applies modern waste management methods such as the 3R principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). For decades, Anjani residents' waste has gone directly to landfills. But in January 2023, the LSD implemented a waste management system involving garbage dump administrators who are also former migrant workers. Every month, this system helps reduce non-organic waste by as much as 4 tons. The LSD also set up a place for cultivating black soldier fly larvae, which helps decompose organic waste for later use as animal feed or compost.

All of our achievements are the fruits of the support and trust of the people and government of Anjani village, as well as our partners and stakeholders, such as ADBMI and AWO International. They inspire us to continue serving and empowering the migrant worker community.

Project Details



✓ **Project Name**

Scaling up Community Initiatives for Migrant Workers' Early Protection in their Villages in East Lombok

✓ **Partner Organization**

Lembaga Advokasi Buruh Migran Indonesia (ADBMI Foundation)

✓ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Villages of Wanasaba, Anjani, Pringgasela Timur, Suradadi and Ketapang Raya in Lombok, Indonesia

✓ **Target Group**

Migrant workers and their families, residents in the project areas, members of the community-based groups organized by ADBMI (the LSDs) (from the 2018–2020 project with AWO International)

✓ **Project Objectives**

- The protection for migrant workers and their families has increased through the collaboration of social structures in their communities.
- Migrant workers' families' economic resilience has increased.

✓ **Run-Time**

January 2021 – December 2023

✓ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

Identity Change: The struggle for success of a Bangsamoro Overseas Filipino Worker

Written by: **Cecilia Marbe S. Hicaro**, External Affairs and Support Services Manager
Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute, Inc.

In order to get a decent and high-paying job, one usually goes to great lengths to attain the Filipino dream of working abroad. Like many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Jumaira got recruited at just 22 years old to work as a household service worker. On paper, she had no choice but to allow her recruiter to change her age and, ultimately, her name. She risked going to the Middle East carrying a different identity so that one day, she could come home and bring success to her family.

IT WAS A BUSY WEDNESDAY MORNING in the city market of Cotabato when we met with Jumaira, 29, who was immersed in serving home-cooked meals to the customers of their mini-canteen. A doting daughter to her father who is the assigned cook and her mother who is the designated purchaser and preparer of ingredients, she politely excuses herself from her parents and finds a spot for her interview to commence.

This falsification of documents is one of the tactics that recruiters in Cotabato City and its neighboring municipalities employ in order to produce labor for their foreign clients. Illegal recruitment of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) has been a common practice for decades until the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was established in 2019 and stricter measures were put in place by the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) in the region.



She introduces herself as Jumaira Macmod, but quickly asks if she was to also disclose her fake identity. This is because, back in 2017, Jumaira found herself being called Hasnaira Sambol, a made-up name to hide her true age since she was just 22 years old then. By Philippine law, the minimum age of working abroad is 24.

Jumaira would recall the day she decided to work abroad. She knew about the repercussions as most of her aunts were also household workers in the Middle East. She was going through a series of personal crises due to piled-up debts as a result of her mom's sickness and recurring hospitalization. This ultimately made her decide to follow in her aunts' footsteps. She wanted nothing more than to help and support her mother, who saw

her sheer determination for their family to have a better life.

“I left my 2-year-old daughter to take a chance when I could no longer find another solution,” Jumaira tearily shared.

As quickly as her application was processed, her dreams were also shattered. It would only be a matter of time when her overseas employer would deny her food and irreverently call her out for various occurrences in the house that were not of her doing. She took the blame for all the false accusations such as throwing away her employer’s medicines and not taking care of the children properly, even though she already lacked sleep due to the amount of work she had to take on in the household. But she pushed through all the hardships of being a distressed OFW and drew strength and motivation from her daughter and mother until she could find a way to escape her situation. Thankfully, with the help of the Overseas Welfare Workers Association (OWWA), she was repatriated to the Philippines in 2019 with no money and just receipts in hand. It was at this point that she decided she would try to rebuild her life.

“I decided to go back to school and study again. I did everything I could to support my family until Alhamdulillah, I was able to complete my college course last year.” In 2019, Jumaira became a Healthcare Services National Certificate² (NC-II) holder and also started pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education. She graduated in December 2022 and thereafter successfully passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers.

“
I left my 2-year old daughter to take a chance when I could no longer find another solution.

– JUMAIRA

Jumaira would also hear about the livelihood assistance that a partner NGO of the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) is offering. Through AWO International and its local partner, the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute, which has established ties with the League of Bangsamoro Organizations (LBO), she received a Halal siomai (steamed dumplings) and siopao (steamed bun with various fillings) business start-up kit worth 10,000 pesos (176.25 USD) to augment the sales of their mini-canteen. This kit included an electric steamer, ingredients, as well as utensils and food storage containers. They used the items to cook food in bulk to peddle in their neighborhood and sell online. The improvement in

2 A National Certificate is issued by the Philippines’ Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and serves as proof that the holder has undergone a series of assessments and has been certified to possess the skills and knowledge in a particular field. It can boost the holder’s employability and career prospects in the Philippines and even abroad.



Jumaira shares that the goal of BESO, a newly formed self-help group supported by Ople Center and AWO International’s project, is to help uplift the lives of former OFWs in her locality. (Source: Ople Center)

sales and the morale boost helped keep Jumaira afloat and hopeful.

The livelihood training and assistance were just the beginning for Jumaira as she found herself becoming active in the community of OFWs that was established through the beneficiaries. In their recently concluded Leadership Training in June 2023, she bested 19 other leaders and was elected president of the newly formed Bangsamoro Empowered Survivors Organization (BESO). She could not contain her pride and joy when her peers and fellow OFWs trusted her to lead their community.

“To AWO International, thank you so much for the opportunity you have given me to enhance my skills. Thank you for giving me the chance to become an entrepreneur through the training you conducted.”

Jumaira remains driven and hopeful for her family and community. She aims to establish her true identity as a successful teacher, single mother, loving daughter, and business owner.

Project Details



✔ **Project Name**

Protecting Migrant Workers from Exploitation through the Strengthening of Social Structures, the Formation of Alliances and the Application of Ethical Standards and Internet Technology

✔ **Partner Organization**

Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute (Ople Center)

✔ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Cotabato City, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines

✔ **Target Group**

OFWs; women domestic workers who are minors or underaged, who are leaving under unsafe circumstances, or who have endured trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

✔ **Project Objectives**

- Governments have adopted safe migration policies that strengthen anti-trafficking detection and response in ports of entries and exits.
- The newly established and strengthened social structures are applying innovative technologies in protecting migrant workers, especially women domestic workers, from trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

✔ **Run-Time**

September 2021 – December 2023

✔ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

Women Leaders Advancing Disaster Resilience

Written by: Ruth L. Pambid, Project Officer for Project ECSPRes, CONCERN

Jenn, Mariche, and Mylene are mothers, public servants, and leaders who want to make a difference in their community. Their proactive and hands-on approach separates them from the typical government employee. They are pursuing unconventional dreams of empowering their community ravaged by threats from the COVID-19 pandemic, typhoons, and the Mayon Volcano unrest.



One of the projects in the barangay is the establishment of communal garden as part of their promotion of organically grown vegetables. (Source: CONCERN)

MALILIPOT IS A SMALL TOWN IN ALBAY located in between two cities, Tabaco and Legazpi. Typical of towns in close proximity to larger cities, and with no major tourism attraction to speak of, less attention is given to it by the national government; not to mention the fact that the twin threats of typhoons that frequently visit Albay and the Mayon Volcano eruptions have made it even less enticing

for investors to establish shops in the area. It did not help that the previous local government officials cared less about the town's competitiveness – a fact that has made life even more difficult for the women in this town. With less opportunity for growth, they try to eke out a living to help their family meet their ever-increasing needs. These same women, despite their marginalized condition,

are determined to achieve a resilient community in the face of disasters and hardship. These are their stories.

Jenn is a mother of one and a business administration degree holder. As the eldest, she was expected to help her parents provide for the rest of their brood of ten. Work had been hard to come by in Malilipot, even for college graduates like Jenn, and luckily for her, she got a minimum-wage job in the municipal local government.



Mariche has a degree in elementary education and worked for six years as a private special education tutor in Dubai, where she met her husband. When she got pregnant with their first child, they returned to the Philippines and settled in Malilipot,



her husband's hometown. They initially set up a business that has since gone bankrupt after it was looted during a typhoon in 2006. She has been working as a barangay tanod (village guard) since 2019. She has four children.

Mylene is a mother of five. Her husband used to work odd jobs mainly as an electrician. She used to manage her own canteen and fruit stand, but she had to close them down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With no source of income, she was hired by the barangay as a garbage collector and cook. Recently, her husband suffered an ischemic stroke, forcing Mylene to step in as the sole breadwinner of the family.



2020 was a trying year for Albayanons. Typhoons hit the area from May to November and rushing flood waters over saturated the soil, causing massive landslides. Communities were caught unprepared by the destruction wrought by the three very strong typhoons (Molave, Goni and Vamco) that hit Malilipot. All these disasters struck in the middle of a massive lockdown due to COVID-19. The enormous task of assisting the affected populations fell on the local government

units, specifically the barangays. It was through the dedication of public servants like Jenn, Mariche, and Mylene and their task as first responders that lives, livelihoods, and property were secured.

According to them, it was difficult to prioritize their role as frontliners in the community while they themselves were victims at that time. The unique set of challenges posed by COVID-19, typhoons, and more recently, the Mayon Volcano unrest made them realize the need for the community to be better prepared for future disasters. It is this need that the Center for Emergency Aid, Rehabilitation and Development, Inc. (CONCERN) is helping to address by way of Project ECSPRes (Environmental Campaign to Strengthen People's Resiliency in District 1 Albay). The project focuses on the 1st District of Albay, addressing the needs of the target communities affected by multiple disasters and promoting disaster risk reduction, community engagement, and environmental regeneration.

Learning about Project ECSPRes' capacity and strengthening activities on Gender-Integrated Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Management (GICBDRRM), Climate Smart Agriculture, and Environmental Regeneration, these three women understood how the project can contribute to people's resilience to disasters and climate change. It also inspired them to step up and assume roles as women leaders in their community. They believe that being a woman, far from being a limitation, actually gives them a particular ability to recognize complex needs and bring the members of the community together towards a shared goal.

Jenn played a pivotal role in the establishment of social structures in Barangay San Jose in Malilipot, capitalizing on her role as barangay secretary to reach out to other communities covered by Project ECSPRes, as well as provincial LGU office. To broaden her reach, she also volunteered as a training facilitator and resource person on GICB-DRRM topics on Gender and the Institutional Foundation of DRRM. She not only heads the Grassroots Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (GDRRM) formation of San Jose but also assists social mobilizers in the organization of other social structures, especially those of women and youth.

For Mariche, the training in GICBDRRM conducted by CONCERN in response to Typhoon Goni provided her with practical knowledge that she

effectively applied in assisting the social mobilizers of Project ECSPRes in identifying training participants and contacts during the initial project phase. During the development of the project proposal, she assisted in the coordination and provided insights on the complexities and dynamics of the community. She also helps resolve any resource mobilization issues encountered with venues, materials and other requirements.

Mylene, as one of the first volunteers of the Typhoon Goni response, and with her knowledge of the community as a purok (zone) leader, proved invaluable as part of the committee on beneficiary selection, responsible for recommending the criteria for the selection and ensuring strict adherence to its guidelines. She also provided logistical support during the relief distribution as well as administrative assistance in meetings. She was part of the committee on environment in the GDRRM formation and participated in the rehabilitation

of a previously constructed water intake tank for the project. Although Mylene spends more time of late caring for her sick husband, she lends her unwavering support any time the project requires it.

Twelve months into the project, the Malilipot Multi-sectoral Alliance is being formed, uniting stakeholders for issue-based, sector-based, and DRRM activities. The farmers, women's group, and youth volunteers are expanding and leading community initiatives. Three new GDRRMs collaborate in the 11 target barangays, providing psychosocial support. Farmers are gradually embracing climate change adaptation through sustainable practices, contributing to environmental protection.

As for Jenn, Mariche, and Mylene, these women leaders are hopeful that through their contributions to Project ECSPRes, they have planted seeds of change that will resonate far beyond the tiny town of Malilipot.

Project Details



Concern, Inc
Center for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation, Inc

✔ **Project Name**

Environmental Campaign to Strengthen People's Resiliency in District 1 Albay (Project ECSPRes)

✔ **Partner Organization**

Center for Emergency Aid, Rehabilitation and Development (CONCERN) Inc.

✔ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Municipalities of Malilipot, Santo Domingo, and Bacacay, and Tabaco City, Province of Albay, Bicol Region, Philippines

✔ **Target Group**

Farmers, Women, Youth and Grassroots Disaster Risk Reduction Machineries, and Other community members including local officials/leaders

✔ **Run-Time**

November 2022 – October 2024

✔ **Project Objectives**

- The target groups in the target communities are able to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the impacts of disasters and climate change through improved disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) practices and increased participation in local planning processes.
- Farmers have harmonized their livelihoods with environmental regeneration through the application of climate-adaptive farming technology and practices.
- Participation in communal activities, campaigns, and collaboration in strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR), CCA, and environmental protection among local stakeholders (including the target groups) and local government units have increased.

✔ **Sponsor**

AWO International and Aktion Deutschland Hilft

The Hands that Strip *Fibers* and Weave *Success*

Written by: **Jose EG Michael U. Lacre**, Communications Consultant, ECOWEB

Rowelito Itallo, a determined abaca farmer from Sibagat, Agusan del Sur in the Philippines, emerged as a beacon of innovation and self-reliance. His story, more than just a personal triumph, epitomizes the transformative power of self-help and community collaboration, turning challenges into opportunities and nurturing a future for his family and fellow farmers. Rowelito and his fellow farmers continue to innovate, learn, and prosper through the GreenFiber Project of ECOWEB in partnership with AWO International. Their abaca farming not only sustains their families but also fortifies the entire community, ensuring a legacy of self-sufficiency and resilience.

WITH HANDS WEATHERED by years of farming abaca (known as Manila hemp), Rowelito Itallo, 52, from Sibagat, Agusan del Sur in the Philippines, believes that abaca is the lifeblood of his family and farming community.

Farming and cultivating abaca require specific knowledge and skills to realize profitable gains. Rowelito's farming skills were more than just a way to earn money; it represented his commitment to preserving a long-standing tradition of keeping abaca farming alive in their community. This is one of his driving forces to safeguard his family's future, especially for his five children.

Rowelito's connection with abaca farming fueled his passion to produce the finest abaca through respecting age-old techniques yet still being open to modernizing his ways to yield quality abaca.

His success story begins with the assistance he received from AWO International and ECOWEB through the GreenFiber Project, which helps strengthen resilience among abaca farming families in his local community through sustainable livelihoods.



Through this pioneering project, abaca farmers like Rowelito have not only embraced sustainable farming practices but have also ventured into the realms of innovation and knowledge building, which reshape the landscape and their perspectives of abaca cultivation.

One of the pivotal aspects of the project was its introduction of cutting-edge technology to abaca farming communities for improved cultivation and processing methods and better fiber quality, enabling higher productivity. Rowelito narrated that he and other abaca farmers in Sibagat were provided with essential specialized abaca farm tools and equipment, training, and modern agricultural methods alongside joining ECOWEB's team in designing and testing the pedal and manually operated stripping machine. These initiatives enabled them to learn how to optimize their farming practices, ensuring both productivity and environmental conservation.

For Rowelito, this meant stepping into a transformative experience that shifted his ways and streamlined the entire process, making their work less labor-intensive and more efficient.

“When ECOWEB introduced the GreenFiber project, it changed my perspective of farming as simply a way to produce and earn. It made me realize that there are more ways to improve our strategies in cultivating the abaca and processing the fibers. I have seen how they [ECOWEB] put their best efforts to train us and provide us with equipment, thus, I will always consider this as an unending opportunity to grow, learn more, and prosper. It was an overwhelming experience and it helped me change my mindset of sticking to what I already know because there is more to farming that I can discover.”

Armed with knowledge, experience, and resources, he underscored that they embraced independence and ownership in finding innovative solutions to the unending challenge of abaca farming. One such experience was when viruses threatened to wipe out their thriving plantation. However, he remembered what he learned from ECOWEB about combating diseases affecting abaca plants, which pushed him to apply innovative ways to maintain the health of their crop.

Their abaca plantation, once under threat, became a symbol of prosperity and resilience. Notably, this newfound self-reliance empowered them to improve their abaca farming and, consequently, their economic conditions.

The spirit of self-help has always been an approach instilled by ECOWEB for farmers to become forces of positive change for themselves, their families, and their communities. The survivor and community-led response promotes self-reliance, where



*Rowelito Italo showcases his processed abaca fibers and the special machine used for stripping.
(Source: Engr. Doni Koshi Estacion)*



*ECOWEB technical staff meticulously examine the quality and grade of the abaca fiber produced by Sibagat farmers.
(Source: Engr. Doni Koshi Estacion)*

Rowelito’s story is a testament to the transformative potential of localizing the support. Through nurturing their strengths and capacity to become active leaders, it elevates communities’ work to value a culture of resilience and self-sufficiency.

“We [abaca farmers] were always scared of our future in abaca farming. We were once threatened with diseases that wreaked havoc in most of our abaca farms. It slowed down the production but it did not stop us from controlling and managing the problem. We were able to contain it using the techniques taught to us by ECOWEB through management and post-harvest handling. We were desperate to save it because this is our life, abaca farming is our life.”

Crucially, ECOWEB played a role in facilitating this positive change among these farmers. However, even though the organization provided the necessary guidance and resources, the spotlight is on the farmers themselves, who have fostered a deep sense of initiative and collaboration among them to ensure sustainability and solidarity for their only source of livelihood.

Furthermore, Rowelito’s journey did not stop within the confines of his locality. The Green Fiber Project, with its vision of holistic development, provided him with a unique opportunity to go to different places to benchmark and have an immersive learning experience by observing other facilities. There, he learned more diversified farming practices and witnessed firsthand other innovative methods

employed by his fellow farmers. In turn, he provided guidance that could help improve the quality of their produce.

“Aside from joining training and other activities conducted by ECOWEB, it was a big help for me to be able to engage with farmers from other places and exchange ideas on troubleshooting and other technical skills needed for the advancement of our abaca farming. It enriched my understanding, and I was able to adopt other ways that I can apply in our community, too. It was memorable for me because I was able to teach other farmers and assist them in processing.”

Through the support of AWO International, ECOWEB continues to foster hands-on experience, collab-

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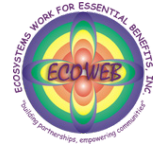
It was memorable for me because I was able to teach other farmers and assist them in processing.

– ROWELITO

orative learning, and continued efforts in representing the farming communities to upgrade their capacities, involve them in the decision-making process, and acknowledge existing local practices. This paves the way for more resilient farming communities, especially for abaca farmers.

Just as Rowelito’s knowledge and experience continue to grow, so does the potential for abaca farming to thrive, helping to meet the needs of families and the entire community as a whole. His hands, like those of other abaca farmers, stripped fibers of perseverance and pride and weaved them into their own stories of success.

Project Details



✔ **Project Name**

Strengthening Resilience among Abaca Farming Families in Sibagat, Agusan Del Sur through Sustainable Livelihoods and Transitioning to Green Technology (GREENFIBER PROJECT)

✔ **Partner Organization**

Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc. (ECOWEB)

✔ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Municipality of Sibagat, Province of Agusan del Sur, Caraga Region, Philippines

✔ **Target Group**

Households engaged in agriculture including women, people with disabilities, elderly people, indigenous peoples, and other community members including local officials/leaders

✔ **Project Objectives**

- Target communities are prepared for, can respond to, and mitigate the impacts of disasters and climate change through improved disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) practices and increased participation in the local planning processes.
- Farmers have harmonized their livelihoods with environment regeneration through the application of climate-adaptive farming technology and practices.
- Participation in communal activities and campaigns as well as collaboration in strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR), CCA, and environmental protection among local stakeholders including farmers, women, youth, and local government units have increased.

✔ **Sponsor**

AWO International, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development via Engagement Global gGmbH/BENGO, and Aktion Deutschland Hilft

From Despair to Resilience: Nora's inspiring journey of hope

Written by: Emily B. Mejica, Family and Community Development Worker,
HOPE worldwide Philippines, Center of HOPE Tacloban

Meet Nora Saberon, a Barangay Health Worker, whose life was shattered by Typhoon Rai. Follow her remarkable journey as HOPE worldwide Philippines extends a helping hand, not just rebuilding homes but also creating jobs and empowering the community. Discover how Nora's unwavering spirit and the organization's support sparked a chain reaction of resilience. Witness the transformative power of gratitude and determination as Nora's own story unfolds, from a dedicated health worker earning a meager salary to a thriving entrepreneur. Be inspired by the incredible impact of HOPE in the face of adversity.



NORA'S JOURNEY FROM BEING A VOLUNTEER to becoming a beneficiary-turned-entrepreneur is a testament to the transformative power of assistance and the positive ripple effect it can have on individuals and communities.

In the tranquil Barangay Mac in Sogod, Southern Leyte, Nora Saberon, 50, led a simple life with her husband and four children. Nora is dedicated to her job as a Barangay Health Worker despite earning a meager salary of only 1,000 pesos (18 USD) a month. Her husband, a mason and carpenter, struggled to find regular employment. Their lives took a devastating turn when Typhoon Rai swept through their community, leaving destruction in its wake.

The powerful typhoon caused the destruction of countless homes, including Nora's own. The family's belongings were washed away, leaving them with only the clothes on their backs as they sought



*Nora currently runs a small eatery in their community.
(Source: HOPE worldwide Philippines)*

refuge at Nora’s parents’ house. Assistance from the government came in the form of relief goods, providing temporary relief but leaving them without the means to rebuild their home and their lives. They faced an overwhelming sense of despair.

Amidst this darkness, Nora and her family found a glimmer of hope thanks to HOPE worldwide Philippines, which provided them with much needed support – not only offering immediate relief but also helping them start over. Her family became one of the beneficiaries of the organization’s Shelter Assistance Repair program, a lifeline that would enable the residents of Barangay Mac to rebuild their damaged houses and create safe and secure living conditions.

The local residents were able to uplift their economic condition through job opportunities offered by the project. Nora’s husband was one among many who found employment with the project, enabling him to contribute to the rebuilding efforts and provide for his family during those challenging times. Nora, herself, used the cash assistance she received to put up a small street food stall, creating an additional source of income for her family. Her transformation from volunteer to

beneficiary to entrepreneur not only boosted their finances but also inspired others in the community to pursue their own entrepreneurial dreams and thereby contribute to long-term community development.

The Shelter Assistance Repair program was made possible through the generous funding provided by AWO International. Their support played a vital role in HOPE worldwide Philippines’ efforts to restore homes and bring back hope and a sense of normalcy to the residents of typhoon-ravaged Barangay Mac. This partnership exemplified the power of collaboration and international solidarity in creating lasting impact and transforming communities.

“
Nora’s journey showcases the triumph of the indomitable human spirit over immense adversity.”

Nora’s journey showcases the triumph of the indomitable human spirit over immense adversity. Her resilience and determination, coupled with the support she received, transformed despair into opportunities. Her story serves as a reminder that in the face of difficulty, there is always room for hope, and with hope, anything is possible.



Nora, her husband, and eldest daughter stand strong in front of their rebuilt home. (Source: HOPE worldwide Philippines)

Project Details

✓ **Project Name**

Emergency Response After Typhoon Rai (Odette) in Visayas, Philippines

✓ **Partner Organization**

HOPE worldwide Philippines

✓ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Barangay Concepcion II, Barangay Mac, Barangay San Jose, Barangay Zone III, Barangay Zone V, Municipality of Sogod, Province of Southern Leyte, Eastern Visayas Region, Philippines

✓ **Target Group**

Individuals and families affected by Typhoon Rai (Odette)

✓ **Project Objectives**

To alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable people affected by Typhoon Rai (Odette) through the provision of emergency relief supplies.

✓ **Run-Time**

December 2021 – May 2022

✓ **Sponsor**

AWO International and Aktion Deutschland Hilft

Activism for Social Change: Village development and strengthening children's education quality in Ngendut and Sumberagung

Written by:

Muhammad Sofwan Hadi,
Project Associate, INFEST

Nisrina Muthahari,
Project Officer, INFEST

This article describes the experiences of two former migrant workers driving change in the village social structure that contributes to development. Learn about how Lina helps prospective migrant workers prepare to go abroad and returning migrant workers in their reintegration. Be inspired by Suliyati, who wishes to give village children left behind by their migrant worker parents the same gift of education that she received.

EKA HERLINA, OR LINA FOR SHORT, is a 43-year-old resident of Ngendut village in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. In 2003, she decided to work in Singapore to augment the family income and save up to buy a house. There, she encountered several challenges, such as not being able to understand and speak Hokkien. She had to learn the language in order to communicate with the elderly people in her care at work. In addition, she did not get days off or annual leaves. "So, for two years, I never got days off. Since it was my first time working abroad, I didn't know how to lodge a complaint or whom to complain to," she recalls. Her access to communication devices and channels were restricted by her employer, limiting her interaction with agencies that could help her, and even her own family.



This did not deter Lina from achieving her goal of buying her dream home. In 2006, she took a job in Hong Kong as a nanny. This time, she was able to adapt more easily to the working conditions. Her English proficiency also helped her get along with her expatriate employers. "In Hong Kong, it was more enjoyable. My employers were very welcoming and treated me as a family member. Moreover, I had many friends and neighbors who worked there," she shared. After four years of working there, she returned to Indonesia.

Migration planning and reintegration

Lina had an idea that her migration experience could provide useful guidance for prospective

overseas workers. Just like what she and her husband did, those wanting to work abroad should carefully plan for it, including how to save their earnings. It's a huge commitment that is not for the fainthearted, but it paid off for Lina. "I worked in Singapore and then in Hong Kong to be able to invest in a house and some land. Alhamdulillah (Thanks to God), I was able to achieve all our goals. I was even able to send my daughter to college to become a nurse. Financial management is challenging, but we must commit to it," she stressed.

At the moment, Lina serves in Ngendut village as chair of Family Welfare Development (PKK), a women's organization, as well as a board member in the Community of Indonesian Migrant Workers (KOPI) in Ngendut. KOPI is a community-based organization initiated by INFEST and supported by AWO International. She is grateful for the chance to be active in the village community, especially since she is well-placed to help prospective migrant workers prepare to go abroad, as well as returning migrant workers in their reintegration.

Through her involvement in KOPI, Lina, along with other former migrant workers in Ngendut village and INFEST, learned about migration issues and village development. Apart from encouraging a policy of migrant worker services in the village, the group also aims to boost development by pioneering a savings and loan scheme for the community. The capital is collected from membership dues and circulated to members who wish to take out loans for their micro-businesses.

Contributing to other marginalized people

Like Lina, social movements for change were also driven by Suliyati, a 39-year-old former migrant worker from Sumberagung village in Blitar, East Java. Like most of her fellow villagers, Suliyati, after graduating from high school, migrated abroad



Members of KOPI Sumberagung pose for a group photo. (Source: INFEST)

to look for work. She first decided to go to Brunei Darussalam, which is near Indonesia. After returning and starting a family, she once again sought work abroad to help meet their growing expenses. This time, she found herself in Hong Kong, working with three different employers starting in 2009. "For me, working in Hong Kong helped me achieve my delayed goals," she stated.

Suliyati was fortunate to have had employers who allowed her to pursue higher education at Saint Mary's University in Hong Kong. Her reasonable workload allowed her to attend classes and do her homework, with lots of free time to spare. She used some of this free time and her improving knowledge to tutor other migrant workers in English. After four years of studying, in 2013, Suliyati became the proud holder of a Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship degree.

After returning from Hong Kong, Suliyati actively participated in organizations in Sumberagung village, one of which was KOPI. Having received the invaluable gift of education, she thought that many children left behind by their migrant worker parents needed a study group. This prompted her to initiate a program with KOPI Sumberagung called Omah Sinau (learning house), a space for children to learn together and improve their quality of education.

"There was an abandoned house that was not being used by the owner, so I borrowed it from them and turned it into a place for children to study. I tutor them together with some of my friends in KOPI," she explained. Every day, except for Saturday nights, the children of Sumberagung village study at Omah Sinau starting from sunset until 9 in the evening. Omah Sinau not only serves the children of migrant workers; it is also open to other children in the village. At present, there are around 20 to 25 children who are actively studying there, doing their assignments, or learning things they don't understand in school. Suliyati does not make any profit from Omah Sinau; she only asks for a small



fee to cover operational costs. “If you don’t have it, the children are still welcome to come and study at Omah Sinau,” she asserted.

Where migration and development intersect

Migration and development debates in academia have been going on for decades. Migration researchers not only underscore the reduction of unemployment and poverty from remittances sent or brought back to their countries of origin, but also the ideas, skills, and knowledge brought by former migrant workers that can contribute to development.

The concept designed by INFEST and AWO International in their 2021–2023 project in this regard

is to activate returned migrants in raising social movements for change. The social capital that they already have is expected to be able to increase collective investment in development. The vast majority of Indonesian migrant workers come from rural areas, which have long been sidelined in development. Activating their potential and capacity will be directly proportional to the creation of a strong social development infrastructure in their villages. This initiative also aims to eliminate negative stereotypes associated with migrant workers, and instead present them as what they truly are – catalysts of change in development who are capable of elevating the socio-economic conditions of their families, community, and country.

Project Details



✔ **Project Name**

Activating Migrant Worker Community Based Organization for Public Service Enhancement and Socio-Economic Improvement in East Java, Indonesia, and Johor Bahru, Malaysia

✔ **Partner Organization**

Institute for Education Development, Social, Religious, and Cultural Studies (INFEST)

✔ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Blitar and Ponorogo Districts, East Java, Indonesia.
Johor Bahru, Malaysia

✔ **Target Group**

Migrant workers and their families; government officials and staff from the project villages, district government, and national government (specifically, staff from Indonesia’s Ministry of Manpower and National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas); village residents from the project areas; members of vulnerable or marginalized groups; and members of the community-based groups organized by INFEST (the KOPIs/KOMIs) from the 2018–2020 project with AWO International

✔ **Project Objectives**

- Migrant workers protection is better integrated at different policy and administration levels in East Java, Indonesia, and Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- The socio-economic situation of migrant workers and their families in East Java has been improved by the economic strengthening of the community-based organizations under the project.

✔ **Run-Time**

January 2021 – December 2023

✔ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

Empowering Migrant Workers: Reflections on the impact of a regional case conference

Written by:

Narikah, Founder, Advisor,
and Coordinator, Indonesian
Migrant Domestic Workers
Association (PERTIMIG)

Abigail Guevara,
Project Assistant,
Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

The increasing vulnerabilities migrant workers face as a result of various factors at play emphasize the urgent need for accessible and inclusive social protection. MFA and PERTIMIG share their thoughts and realizations on a recent milestone event.



MIGRANTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES face a lack of access to regular and safe migration channels, and their access to justice and social protection services is limited. Already struggling with precarious employment and

limited social protection, they faced heightened challenges during the COVID-19 global health crisis. The pandemic exposed systemic inequities and pre-existing vulnerabilities. Hence, the need to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of social protection and cross-border labor migration litigation processes becomes even more crucial. To ensure that laws are applied to prosecute abusers and traffickers, and to safeguard survivors, extensive information and committed groups of lawyers are needed.

This year, MFA continued to advance the rights of migrants through lobbying and networking, capacity building, and other means with the support of AWO International. On the part of MFA, cross-border

support from various stakeholders in countries of origin (COOs) and countries of destination (CODs) has been going on for many years, mainly by linking civil society groups, pro-bono lawyers, and community groups in CODs, with the sole purpose of ensuring portable justice for migrant workers. From this, MFA started by having the dialogue between Lawyers Beyond Borders (LBB) and ASEAN Bar Association Coalition on Migration (ABACOM), to having the initiative from national bar associations to create a subcommittee that caters to the issues of migrant workers and their family members, to actively collaborating with national civil society organizations in handling cases.

For the first time in MFA's history, a Regional Case Conference on Cases of Filipino and Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia was conducted from 25 to 27 May 2023. It was done with the help of the Malaysian Bar Council and attended by a number of groups handling migrant workers' cases of abuse and representatives from the bar councils from the three countries. The event was a follow-up to the Capacity Building of Lawyers on Case Management



The participants who attended the case conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia consist of civil society organizations, lawyers from bar associations, migrant leaders, and migrant workers. (Source: MFA)

and Cross-Border Referral and Litigation conducted earlier in the year.

AWO International supports the convening of the bar councils to discuss labor migration issues and enhance their capacity to deliver legal assistance for migrant workers by exchanging information on policies and practices in their respective countries.

From MFA: Unity and action towards justice for migrant workers

As an organizer of the recent case conference in Malaysia addressing the challenges faced by Filipino and Indonesian migrant workers in accessing justice, I am deeply moved by the profound impact this event has had on me personally and on our collective mission in partnership with the Malaysian Bar and supported by AWO International. The conference not only highlighted the realities that migrant workers face but also illuminated potential pathways toward meaningful change through the lawyers.

One of the revelations from the conference was the extent of obstacles that migrant workers encounter when attempting to report abuses and seek justice. The fundamental problem lies in the dearth of efficient channels available to them. This scarcity

leaves migrant workers exposed to exploitation and abuse. What’s even more disheartening is the very real fear of retaliation that hangs over them every single day. It became evident that for many migrant workers, the act of filing a complaint against their employers is equivalent to the end of their employment. Consequently, long-term improvements in securing fair wages and better working conditions often remain elusive in reality.

However, amidst these daunting challenges, the conference offered a glimmer of hope. It underscored the crucial need for remedies to address these issues. Without such remedies, we risk complicity in perpetuating the abusive treatment of migrant workers. The conference served as a catalyst for change, bringing together various stakeholders who share a common commitment

to improving the lives of these migrant workers. Civil society groups, pro-bono lawyers, and bar associations from Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia all united with a purpose – to ensure justice for migrant workers, regardless of their circumstances.

This unity that we witnessed during the conference is the driving force that will help us implement the remedies discussed. These remedies are not mere abstract concepts; they are actio-

**“
Consequently, long-term improvements in securing fair wages and better working conditions often remain elusive in reality.”**

nable steps that hold the potential to dismantle the barriers that stand in the way of justice for migrant workers. They foster understanding, not only among those who participated in the conference, but also among the broader community of stakeholders who share our commitment.

The first case conference was not an endpoint but a significant milestone in our journey toward justice and equity for migrant workers. As we move forward, we remain committed to translating these discussions into tangible outcomes that will shape a more just and equitable reality for all migrant workers. The conference was not just a moment in time; it was an impetus for long-lasting change, and its impact will resonate far into the future.

From an Indonesian migrant leader in Malaysia: A beacon of hope

As a migrant leader, the case conference that took place in Kuala Lumpur was a turning point in my life and the lives of countless others migrant leaders and workers. As we gathered, a legal expert took the floor, explaining the various avenues available to us for seeking justice. For years, we, the Indo-

nesian and Filipino migrant workers in Malaysia, had a fear of the unknown and the complexities of the legal system had kept us silent. But on that day, a profound transformation took place. The atmosphere changed with anticipation and gave us a sense of hope.

When it was my turn to speak, my voice was shaking, but I knew I had to convey what was in my heart to tell the stories of Indonesian migrant workers. It was a feeling of collective empowerment that I had never experienced before. I realized that I am not just a leader; I am a beacon of hope to those who are helpless and hopeless. There were hurdles, setbacks, and moments when despair threatened to overcome us. But we persevered, holding on to the knowledge we had gained and the courage we had found.

I know that our journey is far from over. But with every step, I am fueled by the hope that had been kindled that day in that small room in Kuala Lumpur. I continue to lead, not with a sense of authority, but with the unwavering belief that justice is within our reach.

Project Details



✓ ***Project Name***

Advancing the Rights of Migrants in the ASEAN Region

✓ ***Partner Organization***

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

✓ ***Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:***

Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia

✓ ***Target Group***

Migrants from migrant organizations, ASEAN Bar Association Coalition on Migration, Lawyers Beyond Borders, civil society representatives, diplomatic missions, and members of the parliament

✓ ***Project Objectives***

- Rights-based policy frameworks for managing labor migration in countries of origin have been improved at the ASEAN level.
- Governments have increased focus to advance migrants' rights in ASEAN.

✓ ***Run-Time***

October 2021 – December 2023

✓ ***Sponsor***

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Recentring the Concept of “People-Centered” in ASEAN: Migrant workers must be included

Written by:

Wahyu Susilo,
Executive Director,
Migrant CARE

Trisna Dwi Yuni Aresta,
Knowledge Management Staff,
Migrant CARE

Do we truly know the meaning of “people-centered”, which the ASEAN community often uses? It appears to reflect inclusiveness and guarantee the participation of “people” in supporting the entire ASEAN agenda. But is it true that this can be easily achieved, or is it merely jargon? Migrant CARE, a partner of AWO International, always ensures and encourages that the concept of being “people-centered” is truly centered on “people” so that grassroots voices, mainly those of migrant workers, can be accommodated in mechanisms that guarantee their protection.

ASEAN and its “people” orientation

AT ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2015, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a declaration that made it a people-centered organization. This declaration was welcomed by at least 632 million “people” in 2015 as an initial foundation that all commitments that will be born will be in favor of people as expected.

However, the events organized by ASEAN, especially the series of talks at the ASEAN Summit, to date have never involved people nor listened to the aspirations of vulnerable groups in an inclusive, meaningful, and sustainable manner.

There is an ASEAN Civil Society Forum (ACSC) – which represents several civil society organizations (CSO) focusing on issues such as human rights,

ASEAN regional democratization, and migration issues – but the Forum has not been recognized by ASEAN and ASEAN member states.

The biggest test of being “people-centered” is in conflict with the principle of “non-interference”. Often, issues brought up by CSOs that are discussed at the regional level are seen as sensitive and under the purview of the respective countries. The principle of non-interference as part of the ASEAN Way often becomes a barrier in the name of each country’s sovereignty. This principle should be reviewed dynamically in line with the development of humanitarian principles, international norms, and universal values.

If we look at the pillars of ASEAN, including political-security, economic, and socio-cultural, there are still major issues that are intertwined

– the complexity of Myanmar’s problems that have never been resolved decisively, widespread human trafficking, the issue of migration that is only seen as a socio-cultural issue, the issue of the climate crisis, and other issues that are increasingly adding to the list of citizens’ fears. When ASEAN’s silence deafens our ears, “people” must demand and reclaim the “people-centered” discourse. And that is all that can be done.

Migrant workers as ASEAN “people”

“There is no quality and sustainable growth in ASEAN without recognition and protection of migrant workers.”

– Wahyu Susilo, Migrant CARE Executive Director

Migrant CARE always reads the increasingly complicated regional situation, especially as it relates to migrant worker protection schemes. ASEAN as a community also acts as a country of origin and destination for migrant workers. The spirit of regionality that underpins ASEAN should easily guarantee safe migration but, until now, this hope is still far from reach. New problems have arisen as a result of old problems that still need to

be resolved. For example, the continued neglect of Myanmar’s problems has led to new modes of trafficking and new unreachable territories (online gambling and online fraud).

Migrant CARE is utilizing the momentum of the ASEAN Chair currently held by Indonesia to push for the “people” agenda, especially in relation to the protection of migrant workers. During the 42nd ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo from May 9 to 11, 2023, Migrant CARE held a side event entitled “Ensuring the Migrant Workers Protection Agenda in Indonesia’s Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023” from May 6 to 8. This event was held for three days and was attended by more than 10 CSOs; even migrant workers were present virtually, also in an effort to record the authentic experiences of migrant workers in the destination countries. Some notes and results of this side event were submitted as a recommendation that will be followed up in the form of a joint declaration document. Through this effort, three ASEAN declaration documents related to the protection of migrant workers were born.



The project is also empowering migrant workers at the village level. Members of Dukuh Dempok Village’s DESBUMI, a self help group supported by Migrant CARE and AWO International’s project, are pictured above. (Source: AWO International Southeast Asia)

These three declarations are:

1. ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations
2. ASEAN Declaration on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishermen
3. Declaration of ASEAN Leaders on Trafficking in Persons Caused by Misuse of Technology

After the ratification of the three documents, Migrant CARE held another discussion event entitled “Malam Weekly, ngobrolin ASEAN” on June 3, 2023 in Solo. This event was also an effort to bring the issue of trafficking in persons within ASEAN closer to the segment of young participants. Rifki, a student who attended the event, commented that “It turns out that there are many new modes of trafficking that target young people like me, and

I don’t know much about it so far.” Other young people who attended the event felt the same way when the resource persons explained the new modes of trafficking. Of course, their views and opinions create a new impetus for Migrant CARE to always provide understanding to the community, including young people.

Migrant CARE will continue to advocate for the protection of migrant workers as one of ASEAN’s priorities, not only during Indonesia’s term as ASEAN Chair in 2023 but also in encouraging the ASEAN Post-2025 Vision that is currently being drafted. There must be a concrete roadmap for ASEAN to become a migrant worker-friendly region based on ASEAN’s modalities on migrant worker protection (Cebu Declaration 2007, ASEAN Consensus 2017, Labuan Bajo Declaration May 2023).

Project Details



✓ **Project Name**

Strengthening the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers through the Enactment of Government’s Regulation on the Exemption of Placement Cost for Migrant Workers, and the Engagement with Regional and International Mechanism of Global Compact for Migration

✓ **Partner Organization**

Migrant CARE

✓ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Jember and Banyuwangi District, East Java, Indonesia; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

✓ **Target Group**

Migrant workers and their families, local to national government officials and staff, Indonesian Government representatives in Malaysia (e.g., Embassy of Indonesia, Consulate General in Johor Bahru and Kota Kinabalu, etc.), civil society networks at the national and international levels, academia, and media

✓ **Project Objectives**

- The protection of Indonesia’s migrant workers is improved through the strengthening of community-based organizations engaged in this project.
- Laws and regulations in Indonesia reflect the exemption of migrant workers from placement fees at the national and local levels –as well as through coordination with regional and international mechanisms of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM).

✓ **Run-Time**

October 2021 – December 2023

✓ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

Channels of Hope: Social structures championing change

Written by: **Princess Mae Tutor**, Community Development Worker, MMCEAI

Follow the story of Yzah, a former Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) and migrants rights advocate living in Davao City. Yzah is one of the volunteers operating the migrants' desk in Barangay Sto. Niño, offering her time and energy to help distressed OFWs and their left-behind families. She and her fellow helpdesk officers guide, assist, and regularly follow up on their clients, giving them hope when they thought there was none.

MINDANAO IS HOME to more than 337,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW). Within the eight barangays in Davao City alone, the partner communities of Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions Inc. (MMCEAI), over 3,700 OFWs were profiled in 2021. One of them is Maria Isabel Baguio. Fondly called Yzah by her family and friends, Yzah is one of MMCEAI's most active migrants rights advocates.



Yzah worked as an OFW for more than 15 years. After graduating with a degree in Social Work, she later went abroad to help her family. She worked as a singer in Japan, and later, a

domestic worker and caregiver in the Middle East. It is no secret that OFWs, such as domestic workers, are vulnerable to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Seeing and relating to their plight, Yzah did what she could to help these distressed OFWs.

When she returned to her hometown in Davao City, she became an active member of Nagkahiusang Pamilya sa OFW sa Matina (NPOM), a social



Maria Isabel "Yzah" Baguio on duty at the community migrants' desk. (Source: MMCEAI)

structure composed of OFWs/former OFWs and their left-behind families. When MMCEAI organized a Community Migrants Association (CMA) in Barangay Sto. Niño in Davao City, Yzah became the Vice-Chairperson of the Barangay Sto. Niño OFWs and Families Association (BSNOFA).

"I went through so much in life as an OFW. I worked abroad using regular or irregular means to help my

family and go after my dreams. However, an OFW's life is far from easy. I was in a risky situation. And there were many out there like me badly needing help. When I finally came home in 2005 and later joined a migrants' association in our community, I saw the opportunity to be of help to my fellow migrants and their families," Yzah shared.

Established in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, BSNOFA has expanded its membership from 17 in 2020 to 65 in 2023. It initiated community-based learning sessions and conducted house-to-house visits to track and profile OFWs and their families in Barangay Sto. Niño. 31 members of BSNOFA also participated in various training and learning sessions on strengthening their organization, safe migration, child safeguarding, financial literacy, case facilitation, and livelihood and skills development.

With the establishment of the migrants' desk in their community through the support of AWO International, MMCEAI, the local government of Barangay Sto. Niño, BSNOFA, and the Sto. Niño Anak OFW Organization, Yzah also became part of the Rights and Welfare Action Committee (RWAC). She and

her fellow RWAC members volunteered as helpdesk officers, actively responding to cases of distressed OFWs and their left-behind families. Since the helpdesk began operating, they have already provided assistance to 10 distressed OFWs and 20 OFW children and family members needing help. They also monitor the clients they've assisted through home visits and online kumustahan (conversations).

The image of hope

With the continuous volunteering of the RWAC at the migrants' desk, many OFWs and their families have been helped with their problems.

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When I finally came home in 2005 and later joined a migrants' association in our community, I saw the opportunity to be of help to my fellow migrants and their families

– YZAH

Leah (not her real name), one of the clients assisted by BSNOFA at their help desk, shared, “Yzah has been a great help to me from the moment I approached the migrants' desk. My daughter was a victim of abuse abroad, and I didn't know how to help her because she was far away from me, and I didn't know which agency to contact. I already lost hope. Thinking about my daughter's situation was so hard for me. At one point, I had almost given up. Fortunately, I found out that



BSNOFA members during the celebration of Migrant Worker's Day at Annex, SM Ecoland, Davao City. (Source: MMCEAI)

there is a migrants' desk in Barangay Sto. Niño. So, I went there because I heard that they have helped many distressed OFWs and their families. And BSNOFA, especially Yzah, didn't let me down. She guided me to the agencies and government offices that could assist me. Fortunately, my daughter was able to return home within two weeks. Thank you so much Yzah, BSNOFA, and the migrants' desk." A deep sense of fulfillment from testimonies such as this drives BSNOFA and Yzah to persevere in their work at the migrants' desk.

The experience of BSNOFA and Yzah highlighted the important role of community support systems and empowered organizations in terms of good

migration governance. They made a vital contribution to the effective implementation of policies and systems; community-based mechanisms; the creation of enabling laws; and access to safe, fair, and regular channels of migration regardless of gender, age, or other diversity characteristics.

As migration continues to be a global phenomenon, our world needs more people who have the commitment and passion to protect the rights and promote the welfare of our migrants and their families, who will work together amid differences, and who will make the voices of migrants and their left-behind families heard around the world.

Project Details



▼ **Project Name**

Engaging Migrant Workers and Families in Social Structures Towards Promoting Safe and Regular Migration

▼ **Partner Organization**

Mindanao Migrants Center for Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI)

▼ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

Davao City, Philippines

▼ **Target Group**

Migrant workers and their left-behind families (especially children of OFWs/ Anak OFW); members of community migrant associations in Davao City; duty bearers; civil society organizations working in the fields of migration, environment, peace, and development in Mindanao; and others

▼ **Project Objectives**

- People affected by migration in the target communities can assert their rights and entitlements.
- Strengthened local government localizes and implements existing guidelines and laws on safe migration.
- Migrant workers are better protected through improved local policies on safe migration on a regional level in the country.

▼ **Run-Time**

January 2021 – December 2023

▼ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Overcoming Obstacles: How one woman fought to make her voice heard in her community

Written by: **Judy Ann I. del Castillo**, (Former) Project Coordinator, OND Hesed Foundation

In a world where many voices go unheard, community leader Richelle shares her inspiring journey of overcoming obstacles to make her voice stand out. Facing personal struggles as well as lack of support and opposition from those in power, she persevered and brought about positive change in her community. Hers is a story that is a testament to the power of resilience, determination, and the importance of fighting for what you believe in.

A SELF-HELP GROUP (SHG) is an informal community-based group organized by OND Hesed Foundation, Inc. in General Santos City (Gensan) and the municipalities of Maasim, Kiamba, Malapatan, and Glan in Sarangani Province, Philippines. Here, a SHG is typically composed of 10 to 15 members. Following the social structure approach of Kindernothilfe, seven SHGs make up a Cluster Level Association (CLA), and seven CLAs make up a Fisherfolk Association (FA). The structures under OND Hesed's "Reducing the Risk of Trafficking in Persons [and Forced Labor] among Fishing Workers and Communities through Strengthening of Social Structures" (RTFC) project with AWO International are located in Gensan and Maasim only.

Richelle Somosa grew up in a disadvantaged community in Gensan where opportunities were scarce. She faced many challenges throughout her childhood and teenage years, including poverty



and lack of access to education. Despite these obstacles, Richelle was determined to make a difference in her community. Through OND Hesed, she learned about SHGs and how they help their members create sustainable livelihoods for their families, such as by teaching them how to become social entrepreneurs and guiding them to achieve their individual goals. Richelle realized that one of the most effective ways to make a difference was through advocacy and community organizing and thus, she decided to become involved. She began actively attending local meetings and events, joining her voice with those of others who shared her passion for change in order to speak up about the issues that affected their community.

A natural leader, Richelle is well-known in her community, which elected her as a local councilor to help them with their needs and concerns. She holds an office job in a public hospital in Gensan



Crystal Heart CLA members were trained in food processing techniques, among many others. Now, they sell these food products in the community. (Source: OND Hesed Foundation)

and actively participates in civic and church activities. OND Hesed saw her as an asset and made her the president of the Crystal Heart CLA. Under Richelle’s leadership, the CLA meets every month to discuss issues and concerns affecting them, as well as potential business opportunities to raise funds. They initiated monthly community projects such as coastal clean-ups and feeding programs that have benefited hundreds of undernourished and disadvantaged children in Gensan. Richelle was also instrumental as a resource person in the formation and capacity building of

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They worked tirelessly to overcome the obstacles they faced, never losing sight of their goal of creating a more just and equitable society.
”

other SHGs and CLAs, which have since received livelihood grants from the government.

Despite the progress they were making, Richelle and her network faced significant obstacles along the way. In 2021, tragedy struck when a fire broke out in their neighborhood, which even reached the Crystal Heart CLA’s fishing gear store, turning their wares and important documents to ashes. They were left with nothing and only had each other and their families for support. Thankfully, they received help for their basic needs



Richelle Somosa is seen alongside her fellow Crystal Heart CLA members in their fishing gear and variety store, which serves as their means of livelihood. (Source: OND Hesed Foundation)

from OND Hesed, the local governments, and other agencies, as well as cash assistance from the government. Still, they encountered resistance from those in power, who were often dismissive of their concerns and efforts. They also faced personal challenges, including financial hardship and the threat of violence from individuals who opposed their issues.

Despite these challenges, Richelle and her network remained committed to their cause. They worked tirelessly to overcome the obstacles they faced, never losing sight of their goal of creating a more just and equitable society. One of the most important things they did was to stay organized and focused. They developed clear goals and strategies for achieving them, and they held each other accountable for their actions. They also remained flexible, adapting their approach as necessary to respond to changing circumstances.

Another key factor in their success was their ability to build alliances with other groups and individuals.

They recognized that they could not achieve their goals alone and thus worked to build bridges with others who shared their values. In doing so, they were able to create a broader movement for change, one that is more powerful and influential than any one individual or group could ever be.

Slowly but surely, Richelle and her network began to make progress. They were able to secure funding for their community programs and initiatives and bring attention to the issues affecting their community. They also began to see changes in the attitudes and behaviors of those in power, who were starting to take their concerns more seriously.

Ultimately, Richelle's efforts paid off in a big way. She was able to make her voice heard in the community and create real change that benefited her and those around her. Her story is a powerful example of the impact that one person can make when they are determined and committed to making a positive difference.

Project Details



▼ **Project Name**

Reducing the Risk of Trafficking in Persons (and Forced Labor) among Fishing Workers and Communities through Strengthening of Social Structures

▼ **Partner Organization**

OND Hesed Foundation, Inc.

▼ **Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:**

General Santos City and Sarangani Province, Philippines

▼ **Target Group**

Fisherfolk, their families, and community members; members of the community-based organizations organized by OND Hesed Foundation (SHGs, CLAs, FAs) (from the 2018–2020 project with AWO International)

▼ **Run-Time**

January 2021 – December 31, 2023

▼ **Sponsor**

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

From Victims to Victors: How survivors of trafficking became thriving entrepreneurs

Written by: Zahratun, Project Manager, Perkumpulan Panca Karsa (PPK)

Many migrant women work in the domestic sector and remain vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Ariati was one of the approximately 100 victims of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Rempek Village assisted by PPK, one of AWO International's partners in North Lombok. Her story is sure to inspire distressed migrant workers seeking to rebuild their lives. It is also a call to action for community organizations, institutions, and governments to join forces in putting a stop to TIP.

NTB Province: A source of migrant workers and rising entrepreneurs

NTB (West Nusa Tenggara), one of Indonesia's 34 provinces, has emerged as the fourth largest sender of migrant workers after East Java, West Java, and Central Java. Over the years, a staggering number of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) from NTB, totaling 537,497 people between 2007 and June 2022, have sought opportunities abroad. The lure of economic prospects remains the primary driving force behind these migrations. In recent years, PMI from NTB have significantly contributed to foreign exchange through remittances, recording an impressive IDR 1.02 trillion in 2021 and IDR 609.84 billion in 2022 (BPS NTB, 2022), and national data shows that 70 percent of the PMI are women in Indonesia (BNP2TKI, 2019).

North Lombok Regency: A struggle against poverty and adversity

North Lombok Regency (KLU), one of the 10 districts in NTB, is home to a project collaboration between AWO International and the Panca Karsa Association (PPK). Unfortunately, it also holds the distinction of being the poorest district in NTB, with around 27 percent of its population living in poverty. The devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake of 2018 compounded the economic challenges faced by the region.

The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic further crippled the local economy, impacting the primary sources of income, such as tourism. Climate change-related issues, including extended dry seasons and erratic weather patterns, have also hampered agricultural productivity, affecting coconut, coffee, cocoa, and fruit cultivation. It thus becomes evident that economic factors drive for the high mobilization of PMI abroad, particularly women.

The vulnerability of women in the migration process

In the intricate web of migration, women often find themselves burdened with the responsibility of supporting their families, playing a crucial role in domestic affairs. Low incomes and the lack of job opportunities drive them to seek employment opportunities abroad, particularly in the Middle East, where there is a high demand for domestic workers. However, the protection afforded to female PMI remains inadequate, leaving them vulnerable to physical, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse. One of the most prevalent forms of abuse suffered by PMI is the problem of trafficking in persons (TIP).

Survivor spotlight: Ariati's journey from victim to entrepreneur

The struggles faced by Ariati shed light on the realities of TIP. Ariati, who lodged a complaint with the PPK, was officially recognized as a TIP victim, and two perpetrators were subsequently convicted. One of the perpetrators, introduced by a close relative of Ariati in their village, enticed her to work as a domestic worker in Abu Dhabi.



On her way there, Ariati had to transit at seven different locations, with agents present at each place to facilitate her journey. Arriving in Syria, which she thought was just a transit point, she was taken by her employer to work. Only then did she discover that she had been deceived and recruited to work in war-torn Syria instead of Abu Dhabi.

After a month of work, Ariati began questioning her salary, rest hours, and meals. However, her employer ignored her inquiries and immediately took her to the agent's office, where she was physically abused and verbally harassed before being returned to the employer's house. This pattern of physical and psychological torture, along with the non-payment of wages for six months of work, continued. Additionally, Ariati was employed by the agent's family but was never compensated for her labor.

Realizing the danger she was in, Ariati decided to escape. She managed to flee by taking a taxi to



*Ariati stands in front of her vegetable cart.
(Source: PPK)*

the Indonesian Embassy. At the embassy, she was detained for 11 months before being sent back home to Indonesia. In Jakarta, she was given accommodation at the Trauma Care Center (RPTC) for 20 days and was interviewed by the Jakarta KABA-RESKRIM (Criminal Investigation Bureau). After a lengthy investigation and litigation process, the two perpetrators were each sentenced to a mere 3 years and 6 months in prison – too short a punishment for all the suffering they inflicted on Ariati.

As a TIP victim, Ariati endured unimaginable violence and trauma. However, she refused to let her past define her future. With unwavering courage, she sought justice and held her perpetrators accountable through the legal system, paving the way for other survivors to reclaim their lives.

Ariati found solace and support in the Dewi Anjani group in Rempek Village, Gangga subdistrict in KLU. Thanks to the skills she developed from their entrepreneurship training, she started her own vegetable business. Her determination and hard work in the face of financial challenges and social stigma paid off, allowing her business to flourish and improve her family's livelihood.

"In 2019, I joined the Dewi Anjani group in Rempek Village. I was then elected as a group leader and received training in entrepreneurship, business management, and other skills. I also received a loan of IDR 1 million to use as capital for my mobile vegetable business. Now, my capital has grown to more than 3 million, and after almost three years in business, I make a profit of around IDR 250,000 per day. I use half of it for my family's needs, and I save the rest to increase my business capital. I was able to buy a motorbike and a piece of land, where I will build a vegetable shop so that I have a place to sell and store my wares."

Recognizing Ariati's leadership qualities, the community entrusted her with a leadership role within the Dewi Anjani group. As a leader, she has created a supportive environment for other TIP survivors, offering guidance and mentorship. Ariati's journey exemplifies the transformative power of support networks, showing that TIP survivors can emerge victorious as entrepreneurs and leaders, thereby inspiring others in their community.

The empowering role of support groups for PMI

The formation of the Dewi Anjani group in early 2019 brought together former PMI from Rempek Village and their families. Starting out with 25 women members, the group has been actively involved in several initiatives. These include collecting data on PMI mobility, providing information services, receiving and addressing PMI complaints, offering assistance and referrals, and providing capital resources for members and PMI in Rempek Village. Additionally, the group engages in policy advocacy at the district and village levels, striving to protect and support PMI.

A call for enhanced efforts and collaboration

In light of the alarming statistics and ongoing challenges faced in combating TIP, it is evident that enhanced efforts and collaboration are urgently needed. The law upholds social reintegration – the reunion of TIP victims with their families or suitable substitutes who can provide the necessary protection and support – however, effective implementation at the national, provincial, and district levels has been lacking. As a result, many TIP victims are unable to continue with the legal process and do not receive the protection, security, and restitution they deserve, leaving perpetrators free to commit repeated crimes.

Moving forward, it is crucial for the institutions and agencies mandated with the protection of TIP victims' rights to take a more proactive role. By strengthening collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including government bodies, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations, we can work towards a future where the horrors of human trafficking are eradicated. Moreover, we must strive for a society that not only protects victims but also prevents TIP, empowering survivors like Ariati to build successful and fulfilling lives while inspiring positive change in their communities.

Project Details



✓ *Project Name*

Building a Sustainable Indonesian Migrant Workers' Protection System at the Village and District Level

✓ *Partner Organization*

Perkumpulan Panca Karsa (PPK)

✓ *Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:*

Villages of Medana, Tegal Maja, Sambik Bangkol, Teniga, and Rempek in Lombok, Indonesia

✓ *Target Group*

Migrant workers and their families, officials and staff from the village to district-level government, and other community members

✓ *Project Objectives*

- Policies and programs that facilitate safe migration at the local to the district level are available, accessible, and well-managed.
- Vulnerabilities of high-risk trafficking in person communities are reduced.

✓ *Run-Time*

January 2022 – December 2023

✓ *Sponsor*

AWO International and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

Bridging *Differences* and Nurturing a Culture of *Resilience* in Cianjur

Written by:

M. Fajrin Al Fikri,
Information and
Communication Staff,
YEU in Cianjur

Eli Sunarso,
Project Manager,
YEU in Cianjur

Mr. Dadang, like many Javanese who only have one name, is a native of Cianjur District, an area hit by an earthquake in November 2022. He and his family survived the ordeal, and he is now supporting his community in its journey towards recovery.

A man of many talents and still active at 84, he wears many hats in serving the people in his village of Mangunkerta. As the head of Rukun Warga or the neighborhood unit, he provides social services and consultation. This role was crucial in addressing the needs of the communities affected by the earthquake, including cooperating with organizations providing humanitarian assistance.

ON THE 21ST OF NOVEMBER 2022, a 5.6 magnitude earthquake struck Cianjur, West Java in Indonesia, causing severe damage in the region and surrounding areas. The earthquake also affected Mr. Dadang's house, causing significant damage, especially in the kitchen area. His son's house, which is adjacent to his, was also affected.

Fortunately, Mr. Dadang and his family were all safe. He and his wife are now staying in a temporary wooden house across their original house, which is still under repair. They do not attempt to return to their house due to the trauma they experienced during the earthquake.

As a leader in his neighborhood, Mr. Dadang remains busy with post-earthquake coordination meetings and attending relief distribution activities. Before the earthquake, he played an active role in the

community by coordinating social activities, such as Posyandu Lansia, or the integrated health post for older people to get medical examinations in the village every Wednesday and Sunday. In addition, he is also known for his love for the native culture, especially in kidung, a form of old West Javanese musical poetry.

At the moment, he has to halt the Posyandu Lansia activities and focus on recovery in his neighborhood. He was involved in ensuring the smooth distribution of relief aid in Mangunkerta Village. During the emergency response phase, he acted as a mediator to facilitate communication between the village members who supported and opposed the delivery of aid from faith-based organizations. In the discussions, he





*Mr. Dadang poses with his wife, Mrs. Nik Aisyah.
(Source: Fajrin Al Fikri, YEU)*

reminded the opposing sides about the importance of religious tolerance, unity, and humanitarian principles. He said, “The assistance provided in any humanitarian effort is not confined to any specific religion.” With this, he gained the community’s acceptance of relief aid from organizations with different backgrounds, including from YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU).

Mr. Dadang’s many roles in humanitarian assistance in Mangunkerta Village

YEU accomplishes its humanitarian intervention in Cianjur through its community-based approach, where the team works together with the community members and leaders. In March 2023, YEU started a rehabilitation project in the district with funding support from AWO International and Germany’s Relief Coalition (ADH). The assistance from this particular project ranges from the provision of kitchen utensils to the issuance of e-KTP (electronic identification cards), the provision of accessibility assistance for persons with disabilities and older people, and the initiation of basic Disaster Risk Reduction training and Disaster Risk Assessment at the village level. All of these will be carried out until December 2023.

Mr. Dadang is one of the local leaders who actively supports and participates in the above activities, aiming to restore the post-disaster conditions and to facilitate the fulfillment of the needs and rights of the at-risk groups, like older people, persons

with disabilities, those with chronic illnesses, and women-headed households. He serves as a member of the verification team to give valuable information and considerations in the selection of target beneficiaries according to the agreed criteria.

Additionally, Mr. Dadang is involved in the data collection for specific targets, i.e., the older people and persons with disabilities in the village, who were sometimes neglected during emergencies. This is important as YEU’s project with AWO International was designed with inclusivity and community participation in mind. A retired teacher, he actively participates in the training and learning sessions provided by YEU on humanitarian principles and disaster management, including disaster risk reduction. These sessions provide valuable knowledge and skills to Mr. Dadang and the people of Mangunkerta, enabling them to better assist their community in the future.

As a faith-based organization under YAKKUM or the Christian Foundation for Public Health, YEU understands the rejection of some community members. And Mr. Dadang’s presence and wisdom truly bridge misunderstanding within the communities. He believes in the ethical code and the principles of unity in diversity (*bhinneka tunggal ika*) as stated in the foundation of Indonesia as a country. Thus, only in the humanitarian spirit can they recover stronger.

Focusing on at-risk groups

Mr. Dadang recognizes the significance of the project, one of which is the provision of kitchen utensils to the community. Many kitchen utensils were broken and buried in the disaster. This assistance has been greatly beneficial to the community, and Mr. Dadang reminds everyone not to sell these items but use them wisely to aid in their recovery.

YEU targets, in particular, families with at-risk groups and those that have not received similar interventions from other organizations. With its rights-based approach, YEU provides e-KTP (electronic identification cards) to those who have lost them, those with expired cards, or those who have never had one before. There is also assistance provided for accessibility needs, especially for persons with disabilities and older people having difficulty in movement.

Mr. Dadang welcomes these initiatives. “It not only provides much needed assistance to these groups after the earthquake, but also ensures that they receive proper attention and care.”

Preserving a dying culture in post-earthquake Cianjur

Despite his busy schedule in the recovery efforts, he continues to engage in social and cultural activities. He pursues his hobby and passion for traditional Sundanese arts, particularly the kidung, a form of old West Javanese musical poetry. On several occasions at YEU activities in Mangunkerta, he voluntarily began or ended the gatherings with a kidung performance. His beautiful voice and talent are often sought after for community events, such as weddings.

“Kidung is a form musical poetry, practiced especially by the Sundanese ethnic group in West Java. The themes vary from religious messages to jokes, or a customary thank you.”

Hopes for a resilient and united community

Mr. Dadang acknowledges that there are activities and organizations he was involved in before the earthquake that had to be suspended due to the damage and unfavorable conditions. However, he and his wife, Mrs. Nik Aisyah – at 74 years old, just as energetic as him – are grateful that they can still be active and help others.

He encourages other older people to participate in recovery activities that will need their vast knowledge and skills. He also wishes to leave a positive legacy and motivate the younger generation to foster inter-generational community in pursuing resilience.

Finally, he hopes for a swift post-earthquake recovery so that activities like the Posyandu Lansia can resume. He desires for the community to remain united, foster tolerance, and respect diversity. For him, humanitarian efforts that benefit those in need transcend religious differences.

Project Details



✔ *Project Name*

Strengthening the Preparedness Capacity of the Earthquake and Landslide-Affected Communities in Cianjur District, West Java, Indonesia, through Integrated Recovery and Inclusive Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives

✔ *Partner Organization*

YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU)

✔ *Barangay/Village, City or District/Region/Country:*

Villages of Gasol, Mangunkerta, Nyalindung, Talaga, and Ciputri in Cianjur District, West Java Province, Indonesia

✔ *Target Group*

Families directly affected by the Cianjur earthquake at the end of 2022, vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, older people, women-headed households)

✔ *Project Objectives*

- 2,000 most at-risk beneficiaries affected by the earthquake and landslides in the five target communities have improved access to basic needs and protection.
- Communities, particularly in the five target communities affected by the earthquake and landslides in Cianjur, are prepared to protect themselves and respond to future disasters.

✔ *Run-Time*

March 2023 – January 2024

✔ *Sponsor*

AWO International and Aktion Deutschland Hilft

Snapshots



Empowering Every Voice: Progress at All Levels

A multilayered approach to community empowerment is important as it harnesses the collective potential for lasting positive change. We have been making headway ever since we started our regional program on Development Cooperation for “Promoting Safe Migration and Combatting Human Trafficking” back in 2018. Thanks to the hard work of our partner organizations and continuous support from the BMZ–Social Structure Fund, key milestones have been achieved at multiple levels as outlined below:

INDIVIDUAL

100 determined migrant workers and their families from PPK’s project area in North Lombok and their families proceeded to develop sound business plans based on the lessons they have learned from a series of basic to advanced entrepreneurship training and coaching sessions.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

OND Hesed Foundation’s Asnalang Tinoto 06 Fisherfolk Association, organized and strengthened under the program, became the first ever social enterprise with an agrotourism venture called “Tinoto Community–Based Eco–tourism” in Maasim, Sarangani, Philippines.

REGIONAL

Migration, Environment, Peace and Development in Western Mindanao, a region–wide social structure of MMCEAI’s project, has gained a seat at the Philippines’ National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Regional Development Council, the highest planning and policy–making body in this level.

INTERNATIONAL

The recommendations of the ASEAN Bar Association Coalition on Migration (ABACOM) and Lawyers Beyond Borders (LBB) were considered at the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labor (AFML), the body in charge of developing recommendations to the ASEAN Summit. ABACOM and LBB are MFA’s social structures.

There are plenty more. This list does not exhaust all the achievements that each of our partners have been racking up in their work over the years. All progress, regardless of their size or scale, is important as it ensures the forward momentum and successful outcomes of these projects.



Bridging Borders on Global and Local Migration Education: Study Visit to Germany

From 24 September to 07 October 2023, representatives from four of our Development Cooperation Program Philippine partner organizations embarked on a two–week study tour of Germany. This activity was part of the global education initiatives spearheaded by AWO International e.V.

The activity highlighted the interconnectedness between the cultures of Germany and the Philippines. It facilitated the sharing of knowledge and experiences in issues and practices regarding migration and social work encountered by both countries. Furthermore, the tour was also an opportune time to visit and explore various AWO International e.V. facilities in the surrounding areas of Berlin. Participants learned about different migration and integration programs offered in these facilities, such as counseling for youth and adults with migration experiences, assistance for migrants seeking to participate in German society, and many others.



Charting Collaborative Frontiers: Our Growing List of Potential Humanitarian Action Partner Organizations

From 2021 to 2022, we mapped a list of potential partner organizations in the Philippines and Indonesia. The goal was to set up a broader database of potential groups to partner with under our Humanitarian Action Program. AWO International does not directly implement its projects on the ground. Instead, we partner with local organizations and support them in helping and strengthening communities.

In disasters, promptness is vital to the success of responses. Having open lines of communication with different organizations across our operational areas is important to collect data that will help in assessing the situation and responding quickly, where necessary. These databases were put to good use when we responded to Typhoon Rai in Southern Leyte with HOPE worldwide Philippines; and the 2022 West Java earthquake in Cianjur, Indonesia, with YAKKUM Emergency Unit. It facilitated the timeliness and effectiveness of our actions, and even led to new perspectives of looking at hazards and disasters. Also, its use is not only limited to crises; it also presents a list of ready-to-tap organizations with special expertise in DRR, Rehabilitation, Climate Change, and other DRRM-related concepts.



Risk-Proof and Disaster-Ready: Investing in the Regional Office Staff's Preparedness

As the region continues to face more frequent and severe calamities, it is becoming increasingly extremely clear that proactive disaster preparedness and resilience-building efforts in the region are needed in mitigating the devastating impacts of these events. For our office to effectively avoid risks and act swiftly in the event of future disasters, its staff's safety is paramount. Taking care of the carers is crucial in building a strong foundation for successful disaster relief efforts. In the last two years, our office has been increasing the capacity of its local staff and laying down the foundations of how to respond to crises.

Among other things, the office developed its Guidelines on Safety and Security and drafted a Contingency Plan for Earthquakes.

Office staff are also trained in Basic Life Support with First Aid and are regularly supported with refresher courses as well as training programs in other humanitarian-related knowledge.



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Organizations and institutions interested in networking opportunities with AWO International Southeast Asia may contact us in the details provided in this publication.



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Sama-sama para sa patas na mundo.*

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