

Nildas's Second Choice

NILDA ALTENEJO USED TO WORK AS A HOUSEMAID for her neighbor earning 2,000php a month to supplement her husband's work as a helper in the rice fields. Despite the two sources of income, Nilda and her husband did not earn enough to cover the living costs for them and their two sons.



"I worked as a housemaid for 5 years and earned 2,000 a month but sometimes I didn't earn enough money for my children to go to school after paying our family's debts", says Nilda.

Following the unprecedented wrath of Typhoon Haiyan which caused widespread damage to homes and livelihoods in Nilda's baranagay,

San Isidro, the Philippine Red Cross began implementing its Typhoon Haiyan Recovery Operation supporting the needs of the baranagay through interventions on Shelter, Water and Sanitation, Health, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Livelihoods.

As part of the Philippine Red Cross Operation, Nilda and her family were chosen as beneficiaries for Shelter and Livelihood programs receiving a new and stronger house through the Core Shelter program and receiving grants for tuition payment and asset purchase through the Skills Training and Enterprise Development (STED) program.

When Nilda first heard of the STED program offered by the Philippine Red Cross, she immediately submitted herself for an interview hoping that she would be able to receive training on hairdressing and cosmetology.

"At first, I wanted hairdressing but only because I thought that it comes with the make-up training, but it didn't. I found out that I had to take a different course (cosmetology) for the make-up training. I wanted to take a course where I'll learn and benefit a lot. My mother encouraged me to take dressmaking instead since there are only a few tailors here in our Municipality and the existing ones are

expensive. I had no tailoring experience but I took a chance on taking dressmaking”, exclaimed Nilda.

After completing an intensive 3-month training at the Asian Development Foundation College, Nilda received a cash grant of 10,000php through the program which she used to buy a sewing machine, a black and gold Singer.

After purchasing the machine, she started accepting tailoring services from her neighbors and can now give pocket money for her son to go to school. In addition, Nilda is now able to use her new skills to make and tailor her son’s uniform.



“Our life has changed a lot. Before, I had to do extensive and laborious chores in someone else’s house for a whole day and when I got home, I still had to do our chores since I was the only woman in the family. Now, I stay at home the whole day while still making money from the tailoring business. I can spend more time cleaning our house and bonding with my children. Also, I can already give pocket money to my sons for going to school”, says Nilda.

In addition to repairing and altering clothes, Nilda uses her spare time to make footrags, a household slipper to keep floors free of dirt, from used clothing which she sells for 25php per pair. During her interview, she had just accepted ten orders of footrags from a school in a neighboring barangay. Nilda is currently setting aside some of the money that she earns from tailoring towards the purchase of automatic electric machine, an upgrade from the current version which runs using a foot pedal.

“I will do my best to keep this tailoring business going because I can also help other people from it. Sometimes when someone needs some tailoring services and they do not have money, I do it for free because I know what it feels like to have nothing. Before, they helped me when I had none”, says Nilda.

Nilda Alentejo is one of 234 individuals that have completed the STED program to-date and one of 1,375 households that have completed the Core Shelter Program through the Philippine Red Cross Typhoon Haiyan Operation.