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DOST 1 Enhances a Retired Teacher's Dream to Give Jobs to Women, Youth, Elderly in her Ilocos Sur Barangay.



Madam Ofelia Lizardo is the epitome of an Ilocana. Retiring from teaching for 30 years at the M Hizon Elementary School in Tondo, Manila she did not go home to Santa Maria town in Ilocos Sur to spend her senior years sitting and enjoying her pension. Instead, she zealously grouped the unemployed women, elderlies and out-of-school youth of her Barangay Maynganay Norte to form a livelihood program for them.

When she went home to Santa Maria during summer vacations, she always saw that in her barangay many women are unemployed and many youngsters are also idle. This made her dream to help them get out of this useless routine, and lead quality lives.

She taught handicrafts, and other livelihood trainings as a Non-Formal Education (NFE) teacher in Manila and also went to various barangays with the city mayor teaching residents, too.

This pushed her to do the same in her own barangay. With all the enthusiasm and humility to help her fellow women and the youth, she vowed to gather them, help them train in producing throw pillows, curtains and bead crafts which would be their source of income in the future.

In 2009 right after retirement she registered the group of women and youth she formed to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). This makes the group, called the Kababaihan at Kabataan ng Maynganay Norte Livelihood Program, accredited as a non-government organization (NGO) by the local government, and can avail of existing benefits.

Lizardo said that even before retirement she helped one mother train at the Technical Education & Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Manila for six months in throw pillow making.

Throw pillows get exported with DOST

Throw pillow is the first product of the group which was assisted by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Region I through the Ilocos Sur Science and Technology Center headed by Provincial Director Ramon Sumabat. The group has exported their pillows to Filipino communities in the USA and other countries because of the assistance of DOST.

The municipal government of Santa Maria was always supporting the group in its projects. But the group observed low productivity because they did not have proper equipment.

To improve its production the group availed of the Grants-in-Aid Program of DOST Region 1. It was granted a PhP 50,000.00. This amount enabled the group to receive one high speed sewing machine, and two manual ones.

The DOST aid increased the production from an irregular three to six pieces of throw pillows a day to a regular 10 pieces a day. This pushed the group's production to export quality and enabled it to sell to Hawaii 100 to 140 pieces each month.

As the production increased so did the number of workers. Five workers became 10 to 16. The group also became efficient in the operation of their business.

The group is thankful to the government, particularly DOST, for giving it the chance to improve and expand its project. This means so much to them as this pushed the members and other non-member residents to train for more livelihood projects.

Composed of 35 women residents, the group also trained in practical cooking, making kutsinta, puto, hamonado, and empanada, bead handicrafts, foot spa, therapy, and making soap and fabric conditioner under TESDA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The group won three Siglat Awards in 2011: best tourism program, outstanding NGO and barangay herbary; and another three in 2013: gender development, tourism, and best NGO. Siglat Awards is given by the provincial government to recognize the achievement of LGUs, NGOs and individuals in the development of their communities.

*For more information, please contact Ms. Elsa R. Chan, Regional Director,
at Telefax Nos. (072) 888-3399 / 700-2372 or e-mail at dostro1@dost.gov.ph or elrechan@yahoo.com.ph.*



DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Regional Office No. 1
DMMMSU-MLU Campus
City of San Fernando,
La Union 2500

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