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Grassroots Women Initiative in Socio-economic Empowerment and Development

Type of Projects:

Copra Trading Credit/Lending Program, Health & other Income Generating Projects such as Merchandising, Food Processing and Livestock (hog) Dispersal Program

Starting Points of the Projects:

a. Copra Trading

The rural condition is dominantly copra producing area. Men normally undertake the copra processing activities while women take the supporting role as cook and other domestic roles. Coconut farmers (men/women) are generally victims of merchant usury and price manipulation of copra traders. A good number of women participated in a cooperative and took the role as cooperative outlet for copra buying in their community.

b. Urban poor women undertake on their own initiative in coordination with the national based women group to put up a small enterprise for income-generating project (IGP) in Tacloban City. Leyte province and Metro Manila focused on the health program. The women put up a small landing program, merchandising, food processing and hog raising projects.

Women Involved:

- a) Rural poor women from the peasant sector in Bayog Valley (coconut & rice)
- b) Urban poor women from the communities (vendors, domestic helpers, laundry woman & unemployed).

Project Location:

- a) The rural women in Bayog Valley composed of 8 barangays (villages) with an estimate population 6,000 (840 households), 46% of this are women. The temperament of the population ranges from cynicism to openness towards social development work and to the project itself. Initially only about 150 women have participated in the project in Bayog Valley's Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BVFMC).
- b) The Urban women's IGP such as Credit and Lending Program, merchandising, livestock is located in Tacloban City comprising of 5 communities with a total population of 20,000, 50% of which are women. The Health Projects in Pasay has a population of 12,000 and in Malabon, it's 40,000.

Time Frame:

BVFMC started in August 1999 and its still going on. IGP in Tacloban Leyte (urban) started in 1998 and also still going on. Metro Manila Health Projects – started in 1993 up to the present.

Choice and Methods:

The cooperative/and other income generating projects (IGP) and deliveries of basic services like health, became one of the basic choice of the project after several community consultations to address the problem resulting from poverty due to inequality in access of land ownership and housing, low-productivity, poor delivery of basic

services such as health, unsafe water supply, etc. marketing of agri-products, high prices commodities, unemployment.

Impact-Results:

Initially and generally, with the active participation of women in various line of services of the cooperative/IGPs some tangible results visible:

- increase in family income, women's supplementary income contribution to the family income has become significant if not a major contribution
- basic needs of the family are slowly being achieved especially food and education or schooling of school-aged children
- social relations inside the family/ management skills has improved at some level now women become major partner in planning of the family as much as livelihood efforts, reproductive activities, etc.
- slowly the problem in agrarian relation and access to land has also improved some families have achieve the rights of recognizing tenants and some have actually owned the land they till.
- awareness and incidence of domestic violence have decrease in number

Violeta Murillo works with PILAKK, a women's federation in Metropolitan Manila and the province of Bulacan, in the Philippines. PILAKK is also partner with Likhaan, a women's NGO, office@likhaan.org