

Balitang DAR

Official Newsletter of the Department of Agrarian Reform

April-June-2017

MARBAI farmers reclaim land from Lapanday



Photos by Jiru Rada

DAR employees help colleagues displaced by Marawi crisis

ILIGAN CITY, Lanao del Norte—The fighting in Marawi has been raging for more than a month now. Most of the city's 200,000 residents have fled, and many are stranded in evacuation centers. DAR employees and their families were not spared.

Thankfully, the DAR Employees Association (Darea) of DAR Region 10 with support from DAR ARMM Secretary Amihilda Sangcopan, Undersecretary for Foreign Assisted Projects Sylvia Mallari and Regional Director Faisar Mambuay have stepped up to the challenge by helping colleagues and their families cope with the crisis.

Twenty two affected families of displaced DAR employees were given relief and food supplies by the Darea Region 10 on June 12, 2017 at the DAR provincial office in Iligan City.

"We packed more than 200 bags of basic goods which we gave to our co-workers and farmers. This is just our initial effort. We hope to help more DAR employees and their families in the coming weeks," said Darea Region 10 President Joy Chua.

Chua said the Darea national headed by Antonia Pascual is now coordinating with the Darea regional and provincial groups to gather donations in cash and in kind from their respective areas to give to families affected by the crisis.

"We are appealing to our friends and colleagues in the department to donate what they can to our co-workers here who are in dire need of basic necessities like food, medicines, blankets and toiletries," said Chua.



Undersecretary Sylvia Mallari led the distribution of relief goods assisted by Regional Director Faisar Mambuay. The relief effort was spearheaded by the DAREA Region 10 headed by Joy Chua.

Displaced farmers and employees

After the distribution of relief goods, Provincial Agrarian Reform Program officer Mesug Unda reported the situation of DAR employees and farmers in Marawi City to Undersecretary Mallari. He said more than 240 families including farmers and DAR employees were displaced to evacuation centers and nearby provinces.

"The DAR office in Marawi City is right in the middle

of the battle zone. Nagbabarilan sila sa DAR office," said Unda.

Unda said around 139 DAR employees live in Marawi. "Houses were burned to the ground by the Maute group. Not all houses of DAR employees were burned but a lot were ransacked and looted by the Maute group, by civilians and even by the army," Unda sadly reported.

Also caught in the war zone is the seven barangays of Malimuno Tulay Agrarian Reform Community (ARC) where 780 agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) reside. "The ARC suffered air strikes where a lot of people died," Unda said.

Unda reported that the entire ARC population were displaced and are dispersed in evacuation centers. Around 300 were identified to be seeking refuge in Pantar, Lanao del Norte. The

rest are yet to be determined.

Help and support for farmers

A few weeks after the DAR ARMM regional office became part of the war zone, DAR ARMM Secretary Amihilda Sangcopan set up a satellite office in Camague Highway in Iligan City with the aim to continue serving the farmers.

According to Sangcopan, only two desktop computers were saved from the DAR Lanao office. It was recovered at a great risk by the brave personnel of DARPO Lanao. The temporary office also serve as a sanctuary for the DAR personnel to come together and work in spite of the limited

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DAR issues guidelines for agrarian law implementation cases

By Remy Arcaina

THE DEPARTMENT of Agrarian Reform (DAR) has issued rules and regulations amending Administrative Order (A.O.) No. 03, Series of 2003 on adjudication of cases involving Agrarian Law Implementation (ALI) to foster a just, inexpensive, and expeditious determination of agrarian case though A.O. No. 03, Series of 2017.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael V. Mariano said these rules shall be known as the "2017 Rules of Procedures for ALI Cases".

He said these rules shall govern among others, all cases arising from or involving classification and identification of landholdings for coverage under the agrarian reform program and the initial issuance of Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) and Emancipation Patents (EPs), including protest or oppositions and petitions for lifting of such coverage.

He also added the rules include the

classification, identification, inclusion, exclusion, qualification, or disqualification of potential/actual farmer-beneficiaries, subdivision surveys of land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and cases or disputes, arising from the need for continued possession and installation of agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The case also includes, cases or disputes, arising from or regarding the maintenance of possession or reinstatement of actual tillers not bound by any tenurial relations on landholdings devoted to agriculture in the guidelines and other agrarian cases, disputes, matters or concerns referred by the Secretary to the Regional Director, other DAR Officials, or in other cases where the Secretary assumes jurisdiction.

"In cases with resolutions, orders or decisions which have attained finality or have been executed, the DAR in the exercise of its adjudicatory powers in the resolution of

cases involving ALI is not barred from taking cognizance of new controversies arising from changes in the conditions of the subject landholdings or parties," Mariano added.

Mariano said the Regional Director shall exercise primary jurisdiction over all ALI cases except when a separate special rule vest primary jurisdiction in a different DAR Office.

However, the Secretary shall exercise appellate jurisdiction over all ALI cases, and may delegate the resolution of appeals to any Undersecretary.

He disclosed that when an ALI case raises a prejudicial issue, such issue being a DARAB case, the Secretary/Regional Director shall dismiss without prejudice the case pending resolution of the prejudicial question.

"Appeals to the Secretary shall be given due course on the decision of the Regional Director on serious errors in the findings of facts or conclusion of law which may cause

grave and irreparable damage or injury to the appellant or coercion, fraud, or clear graft and corruption in the issuance of a decision," Mariano said.

He added that a party may file only one motion for reconsideration of the decision of the Secretary or deciding authority within a non-extensible period of fifteen days from receipt of the Secretary's decision.

Mariano said appeals from the decision of the Secretary may be taken to the Office of the President within fifteen days from receipt thereof.

He said that orders/decisions/resolution shall become final and executory after the lapse of fifteen days from the receipt by the last recipient of an official copy thereof and no motion for reconsideration nor appeal therefrom.

"Execution shall issue automatically as a matter of course upon finality of the case. The Regional Director shall issue the necessary certificate of finality within five days from date of finality of a case," Mariano added. ●

Hda. Luisita beneficiaries stay as owners of farmlots awarded to them under CARP

AGRARIAN Reform Secretary Rafael “Ka Paeng” Mariano has declared that ownership and control of farmlots awarded to farmer-beneficiaries inside the Hacienda Luisita stay with them as all form of contracts they had entered into, be they rent out, lease out and/or sales, among others, are considered void ab initio or void from the very beginning.

Mariano issued this clarification in the wake of reports that any farmer-beneficiaries found to have sold, leased or rented out the farmlots awarded to them under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) would be disqualified and stripped of their rights as beneficiaries.

“In the first place, no violation was ever committed since the act being imputed to was void ab initio or void from the very beginning, as if no offense had ever been committed,” the Secretary explained.

Mariano cited Section 70, paragraph 2 of the Republic Act 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL), which states that: “Any sale or disposition of agricultural lands after the effectivity of this Act found contrary to the provisions hereof shall be null and void.”

This, he said, is reinforced by the prohibitory acts under Section 73 (f) of the same law: “The sale, transfer or conveyance by a beneficiary of the right to use or any other usufructuary right over the land he acquired by virtue of being a beneficiary, in order to circumvent the provisions of this Act.”

The DAR chief said the visit to Hacienda Luisita

was only meant to stress the fact that the ownership and control over the farmlots awarded to each farmer-beneficiary stay with them as the various form of transferring and/or conveyance the rights over the said farmlots were illegal and, therefore, have no force and effect.

Mariano said he would file charges against any politicians and individuals found to have acted as fixers or “aryendadors” for violation of the Republic Act 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL), which prohibits the selling and/or transferring of awarded farmlands, except through the government or hereditary succession.

“The aryendo system must stop. Those financiers or aryendadors, who coerce and swindle farmer-beneficiaries must be charged for obstruction of land reform inside Hacienda Luisita,” Mariano said.

Based on the report culled during the month-long interview, from March 6 to April 7, conducted by the DAR on the more than 6,000 ARBs, influential personalities and politicians were identified as the financiers or aryendadors.

Barangays Mabilog, Pando and Morico had been found to have the biggest percentage of ARBs who rented out their farm lots. They admitted that their awarded lands were leased for P7,000 yearly to a prominent political Ican in Tarlac province. Barangays Cutcut II and Mapalacsiao, on the other hand, have the biggest number of ARBs, whose awarded farm lots had already been “sold”, the report added.



AGRARIAN Reform Secretary Mariano and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Judy Taguiwalo launch the mural exhibit, entitled: “Larawan ng K apayapaan (Portrait of Peace) last May 22 at the DAR Central Office, in support of the ongoing peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Mariano said the pieces of art exemplified the aspirations of the Filipino people for a lasting peace and order in the countryside.

DAR, WFP agree on programs on agri productivity

By Pinky Roque

THE DEPARTMENT of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) recently agreed to develop and implement schemes that would help improve land tenure, increasing agricultural productivity, promote social protection and enhance climate resilience in agrarian reform communities (ARCs).

DAR Secretary Rafael V. Mariano said the first agenda of the agreement is to publish an atlas to serve as reference materials for strategic planning and policy formulation for land tenure improvement and support services delivery, food security and social protection programs and projects.

“We, in the DAR and the WFP will now start gathering data, monitoring and assessing information for the book that would be called The Philippine Food and Nutrition Security Atlas,” said Mariano.

The signed agreement between the DAR and WFP will be in effect up to 2020.



DAR Secretary Rafael V. Mariano shake hands with WFP Country Director Praveen Agrawal after signing the partnership for rural productivity and land tenure improvement.

DAR clears policy on conversion of agri lands

THE DEPARTMENT of Agrarian Reform (DAR) clarified the current policy of the DAR on the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses.

Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Office Atty. Luis Meinrado C. Pangulayan said that, as of this date, no moratorium of any kind involving the conversion of agricultural lands to residential, commercial or industrial use is being enforced.

Pangulayan said that Section 65 of R. A. 6657, as amended, as well as DAR Administrative Order (A.O) No. 1, Series of 2002 remain in force and in effect and all concerned Offices shall continue to accept and process applications for conversion grant until further instructions from the Secretary.

“We are still awaiting action from the President regarding the issuance of an Executive Order on a Moratorium on acceptance of new applications for conversion of agricultural land,” Pangulayan said.

Pangulayan clarified that a moratorium shall take effect only upon the issuance and publication of the Executive Order. Applications for conversion which have already been filed together with the posting of the requisite application bond shall not be covered by the moratorium.

Editorial

Days of unscrupulous AVA partner-investors

SOME individuals and groups have been promoting agribusiness venture agreements (AVAs) as the best thing that ever happened to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). The problem, however, is that these arrangements had been found highly questionable.

An AVA is actually an “entrepreneurial collaboration” between ARBs and investors, both coming into terms to engage into an agribusiness venture involving lands awarded to the former under the CARP.

However, studies conducted by the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO), international aid and development organization Oxfam-Philippines, the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), and the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Economics, among others, show that big landlords and foreign agricultural corporations use these collaborations to evade land distribution.

The 2015 UN-FAO’s multi-sectoral study on agribusiness venture arrangement policy and implementation under the CARP,” revealed that most ARBs are not aware of their obligations and entitlements because the arrangements are technically written that are beyond their comprehension.

The study, an “Assessment of AVAs in Mindanao,” said that the situation is further exacerbated by the absence of legal representation and the non-adherence of cooperative leaders to transparency.

Oxfam-Philippines, for its part, bared that most ARBs in banana plantations in Mindanao are “embroiled in onerous contracts such that they get to see very little actual economic improvement. Some have been mired in debt for years, lost effective control of their lands and are relegated to being farm workers on their own land.”

The study added that the Philippine government, specifically the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), is partly to be blamed for its failure to protect the interests of ARBs who enter into such agreements without the benefit of legal and technical assistance the DAR supposedly is duty-bound to provide.

The days, however, of these unscrupulous AVA partner-investors are numbered as the current DAR administration and the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) said they would not hesitate to throw the book at them should they be found committing even the slightest tinge of unfair business practices in their dealings with our ARBs.

Just recently, the Lapanday Food, Inc. (LFI) found it out when DAR Secretary Mariano disregarded the alleged onerous AVA forged between LFI and the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association Inc. (MARBAI) and used the DAR’s mandate and state’s police power to install the latter’s aggrieved members into the 145-hectare banana plantation in Tagum City, Davao del Norte that was previously awarded to those under CARP.



Paglingkuran ang Sambayanan

NALALAPIT na ang unang taon ng inyong lingkod sa Kagawaran ng Reporma sa Lupa. Marami na rin ang ating pinagdaanan at mga naga-wa. Mas marami pa ang kailangang gawin at tugunan.

Ang bawat araw sa tanggapang ito ay pagsisikap na pagsilbihin ang DAR para sa interes ng mga magsasaka -- ang tagapaglikha ng pagkain at pangunahing produktibong pwersa ng ating lipunan. Umaasa akong patuloy pang makapaglingkod sa inyo at sa sambayanan sa mga susunod pang panahon.

Nakapaglunsad na tayo ng porum at talakayan iba’t-ibang panig ng bansa kaugnay sa Genuine Agrarian Reform. Sinikap nating ipaliwanag sa mga kapwa kawani sa DAR, sa mga agrarian reform beneficiaries at sa mga magsasakang naaabot natin sa ating pag-iikot sa buong bansa ang pangangailanga ng tunay na reporma sa lupa.

Sa loob ng labing-isang buwan na panunungkulan, nakapamahagi tayo ng 3,275 na mga lupain na may kabuuang bilang na 25,777 ektarya para sa 21,926 ARBs (mula ika-1 ng Hulyo 2016 hanggang ika-30 ng Abril 2017, ayon sa Bureau of Land Tenure Improvement, isang sangay ng DAR). Malayo pa ito sa itinakda nating target subalit nagsisikap tayong pabilisin at isaayos ang mga proseso upang mabigyan na ng lupa laluna ang mga magsasakang matagal nang naghihintay. Gayundin para sa mga ARBs na matagal nang naging benepisaryo subalit hindi nakaposisyon o na-install sa kanilang lupa.

Ilulunsad natin ang isang national land inventory o pag-iimbentaryo ng mga naipamahaging lupa



upang alamin ang kalagayan ng mga ARBs kung sila ay naroon pa sa mga lupang naipamahagi sa kanila at kung ano pang tulong ang dapat na maibigay sa kanila ng Kagawaran.

Pinagsisikapan rin natin ang agrarian justice delivery para sa mga magsasakang kumakaharap sa kasong legal. Gayundin, naglaan ng pondo sa legal defence justice fund para sa mga kawani ng DAR na kinakasuhan dahil sa pagtatanggol nila sa interes ng mga magsasaka.

Kaakibat ng ipinapamahagi natin ng lupa ay ang kinakailangang mga suportang serbisyo at subsidyo sa mga ARBs at magsasaka upang lubos nilang malinang ang lupa.

Hinihikayat ko ang mga ARBs at mga magsasakang benepisaryo ng lupa na sikaping gawing kolektibo ang pagsasaka sa inyong mga lupain at sakan. Ang sama-sama at organisadong pagbubungkal ng lupa ay higit na makapagpapatibay sa kaisahan at kamulatan ng mga magsasaka.

Alam natin ang hirap at sakripisyong dinanas ng ating mga magsasaka para ipaglaban ang lupa na matagal nang ipinagkait sa kanila.

Marami pang dapat gawin ang Kagawaran para sa mga magsasaka at sa pagsisikpa na makamit ang tunay na reporma sa lupa sa ating bansa. Ang tunay na reporma sa lupa kaakibat ang tunay na pag-unlad ng kanayunan ang siyang magiging pundasyon ng hinahangad nating pambansang industriyalisasyon ang siyang makapagbibigay ng mga makabuluhang pagbabago sa kalagayan ng masang magsasaka at sa nakararaming mamamayan.

Balitang **DAR**

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Balitang DAR is published quarterly by the Department of Agrarian Reform Public Assistance and Media Relations Service (PAMRS) – in cooperation with the Regional Directors, Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officers and Information Officers – with editorial offices at PAMRS.

Groups, DAR employees, call for CA confirmation of Ka Paeng



By Pinky Roque

QUEZON CITY—Various groups and the employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) have joined forces to boost efforts in urging the members of the Commission on Appointments (CA) to confirm the appointment Secretary Rafael ‘Ka Paeng’ V. Mariano.

Brandishing flags and streamers, supporters gathered on the afternoon of May 23 in front of the DAR central office to rally in support of Mariano and his genuine agrarian reform initiatives.

Organized by the DAR Employees Association (DAR-EA) headed by Antonia Pascual, the gathering brought together farmers groups, youth groups, women’s groups and other advocates supporting the confirmation of Mariano who has been bypassed for the third time on May 18.

The DAR Regional offices nationwide were represented and gave short talks to show their support to Ka Paeng.

Leaders and members of various groups also took turns in sharing their thoughts on why Ka Paeng should be confirmed as agrarian secretary. Others who know him personally shared their experiences in working with Mariano.

Two weeks before DAREA’s rally, supporters of Mariano held a press conference at the Quezon City Sports Club to ask for support from the public for Mariano’s and fellow Secretary Judy Taguiwalo.

The CA committee on agrarian reform had set a hearing



Above: Sec. Rafael Mariano with-Sec. Judy Taguiwalo raised their fists with supporters during the “confirm Ka Paeng and JudyTaguiwalo” press conference.

Left: DAR Employees from different regions brought banners and flags to show support for Sec. Mariano’s CA confirmation.

for Mariano’s confirmation on May 24 but canceled it five days before the appointed date. As the Senate and the Congress is currently on recess, the committee has no scheduled date yet for the next confirmation hearing.

Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III explained that the Senate rules committee would not be able to settle Sen. Benigno “Bam” Aquino III’s resolution to review CA rules on secret balloting before Mariano’s scheduled hearing.

Aquino raised the issue when the CA held a caucus on May 17, according to Sotto.

Aquino wanted to review the holding of a secret vote

following the CA’s rejection of Gina Lopez as environment secretary.

Groups who have shown support for Mariano’s confirmation on the streets and on the internet: Agham or Advocates of Science and Technology for the People, Kabataan Partylist, Gabriela, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Confederation for Unity Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage), NHA employees’ Assoc., Quezon City Hall Employees Assoc., Anak Pawis, Masipag Farmer-Scientist group, National Alliance for Filipino Concerns (Nafcon) and Kapit Bisig Kabataan Network.

MARBAI farmers reclaim land from Lapanday

“FINALLY, we have reclaimed our land!” cried Corazon Bago, a 63-year-old banana grower, as she and her fellow agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) entered a disputed farm in Tagum City last May 18.

Along with thousands of other farmers and supporters, Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael ‘Ka Paeng’ V. Mariano led the successful installation of the 159 members of the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association Inc. (MARBAI) to the 145-hectare San Isidro (Sanid) farm that was previously managed by agribusiness firm Lapanday Foods Corp.

The re-installation, the third this year, capped nearly seven years of struggle for beneficiaries and their families to retake a portion of the sprawling banana plantation after they were forcibly evicted by Lapanday in 2011.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) tried to re-install the MARBAI farmers twice in April but failed because of the armed goons who barricaded the Sanid area and the failure of the Region XI local police to come up with an operational plan to assist in the execution of a writ of installation.

In his visit at the MARBAI farmers’ protest camp in Mendiola last May 9, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered Mariano to proceed with the re-installation of the MARBAI farmers. “The government promises to grant you the lands you deserve. These lands are yours,” the President said in vernacular.

Clearing operations

Before the re-installation, DAR Sheriff Adelaido Caminade together DAR representatives from its national and field offices met with the Davao del Norte Police Chief to conduct the clearing operations inside the farm.

“This is for the safety of the farmers who will enter the gates of Lapanday for their installation. My team and the PNP will get rid of any obstructions like booby traps that may be present inside the Sanid area,” Caminade explained.

Lapanday reportedly deployed 800 armed security guards to barricade the banana plantation and allegedly installed ‘booby traps’ along the fences according to eyewitnesses.

Last January, Mariano already warned Lapanday of contempt and additional criminal and administrative cases if the banana farmers in Tagum City are not reinstated to their lands immediately. DAR ordered the police to ensure that the security agen-



A group of farmers, led by Rep. Ayik Casilao of the Anakpawis Partylist, march toward the San Isidro farm area in Tagum City to join the protest camp for the installation of 159 banana growers to the 145-hectare land previously managed by agribusiness firm Lapanday Foods Corp., May 18.



DAR Secretary Rafael “Ka Paeng” V. Mariano stands with the agrarian reform beneficiaries of Tagum City after being reinstalled to their government-awarded lands, six years since they were ejected by agribusiness firm Lapanday.

was executed orderly and peacefully. With concentrated force, cooperation and team work from DAR, the farmers, our supporters and the assistance of the Philippine National Police, MARBAI finally has physical control of their government-awarded lands,” Mariano said.

Graft raps vs. DAR officials

On the day of the reinstallation, however, Lapanday filed a complaint against Mariano and DAR Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Luis Pañgulayan for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and grave abuse of authority for DAR orders and court interventions.

cy employed by Lapanday would not interfere with the department’s rescheduled installation.

Caminade added that the clearing operation is necessary to effectively serve the writ of installation and stop any form of violence during the said activity.

“I am thankful that the installation of the farmers



Photos by Xenar Dimalanta

Farmers of the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association, Inc. (MARBAI) raise their arms in unity with hundreds of supporters from Southern Mindanao who joined them in protest against the eviction of banana growers in the Lapanday-managed farm in Tagum City.



Farmers of the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association, Inc. (MARBAI) raise their arms in unity with hundreds of supporters from Southern Mindanao who joined them in protest against the eviction of banana growers in the Lapanday-managed farm in Tagum City.

Lapanday representatives said Mariano overstepped his authority by meddling into the issue. Attorney Noel Oliver Punzalan said the Davao Regional Trial Court already decided that the issue is not an agrarian dispute and therefore beyond DAR's jurisdiction.

The criminal and administrative complaints filed by Lapanday before the Ombudsman illustrate how landlord-oligarchs use courts to thwart the implementation of genuine agrarian reform, according to Mariano.

"This suit is a move by Lapanay to harass DAR officials who are merely implementing the agrarian reform laws and ensuring that farmer-beneficiaries are in possession of the lands that are legally theirs," the agrarian reform chief asserted.

As stated in Section 50 of Republic Act No. 6657, DAR has quasi-judicial powers to adjudicate agrarian reform issues and determine matters involving the implementation of agrarian laws; only the Supreme Court can restrain the department from implementing its decisions.

Mariano added that President Duterte has also warned against the 'use of courts' to block the mandate of land reform, which is to distribute land to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

Last June 9, the Office of the Ombudsman junked the graft complaint against Mariano and Pañgulayan for lack of 'palpable' merit.

Occupy the land

MARBAI farmers staged a camp-in protest at the banana plantation after successfully reclaiming the land in December 2016.

Seven victims were injured after a gunfire attack by suspected guards of the Lapanday struck the farmers' campsite. Amid the wave of attacks on the farmers' encampment by alleged personnel of Lapanday, DAR issued a Cease and Desist Order prohibiting the agribusiness firm from forcibly evicting members of MARBAI from the banana plantation.

They were again dispossessed of their farms when around 300 security guards forced them out of the landholdings a day before 2017.

Lapanday also applied for a temporary restraining order and a writ of preliminary injunction before the Court of Appeals to undermine the Cease and Desist Order issued by DAR. Last January, the court denied the application.

MARBAI farmers met with members of the House of Representatives (HOR) last March when the Committee on Human Rights conducted an initial inquiry with officials of DAR and Lapanday to investigate on the reported incidents.

DAR officials disproved the agribusiness firm's claims and asserted the validity of the department's legal actions based on the presented evidence by the banana farmers. ●

Sulu Royal Coffee now distributor to large food corporation



By Ameen Camlian

MAKE way for the Sulu Royal Coffee for getting the trust of the biggest food-processing corporations in the country!

The Department of Agrarian Reform-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DAR-ARMM) said the Universal Robina Corporation (URC) placed 10 tons of Robusta coffee produced by People's Alliance for Progress Multipurpose Cooperative (PAPMPC).

Coffee-growers leader Kumalah 'Coffee Princess' Elardo said that prior to the placement of order, the URC's research group carefully examined their coffee harvest.

"The coffee beans, produced by will be coming from Kandayok Agrarian Reform Community in Panamao, Sulu," Kumalah said.

The Coffee Princess said the bulk order represents around 70% of their total accumulated harvest in four-months time.

The Sulu Royal Coffee made many successes and recognition in the past with the leadership of the Coffee Princess. The

cooperative abides by their 'pick red' policy in harvesting and other disciplined measures to ensure the quality of their produce.

The cooperative is also responsible for the production of the Kahawa Sug Royal Coffee from Robusta coffee beans and their popular Kahawa Kubing Royal Coffee, roasted civet coffee beans. These products have garnered recognition from different Asian countries.

The growing coffee industry in Panamao, Sulu was observed to provide opportunity for the community to be productive.

'Dati nagkakabayo lang ang mga farmers, ngayon nak amotor na sila... semento na rin ang kanilang mga bahay,' (In the past, the farmers rely on horses for transport, now they have motorcycles... also, their houses are now concreted) said Kumalah.

Apart from that, most of the

workers and members of the cooperative left their past lives of bearing arms and focused on producing quality coffee. Each member of the household in the community are now involved in the coffee production, according to Kumalah.

PAPMPC and the Kandayok ARC in Sulu is a recipient of DAR ARMM ARCCCESS project. The community received common service facilities, agri-enterprise development and rural infrastructure.





The empowered women of Leyte

By John Christopher Colasito

The women of Magbinuligon Bayanihan Association – Women In Development Association (MBA-WIDA) in Tolosa, Leyte are proof that women can indeed bring change and make things happen.

Agrarian Reform Program Officer Ma. Milagrosa Noveda said the MBA-WIDA, with its 379 members of which 197 are females, was organized in 2009 with the help of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

“The organization has a one hectare communal farm planted to high yielding vegetable varieties, in addition to a less than a hectare tilapia fish pond. It is also engaged in rice production,” Noveda said.

But the women of MBA-WIDA, have walked the extra mile. They looked like plain housewives but these ladies constructed their warehouse from scratch. Some of them are certified welders from Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) while others have received training in carpentry and masonry.

“After the super typhoon Yolanda came, the women of MBA-WIDA learned to held hammers, welding tools and do construction work to help their men rebuild their community. There was a serious shortage of skilled labor particularly for carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians and the like. Government agencies and civic-minded organizations started training those interested in these skilled occupations and these women were up for the challenge to do men’s job,” Noveda said.

Several international non-government organizations, private agencies and donors, and government agencies poured assistance to calamity-stricken areas, Tolosa, included. After Yolanda, it opened several opportunities for livelihood and entrepreneurship.

The MBA-WIDA were able to access funding worth P2 million from the International Labor Organization (ILO) for the construction of their building with provisions for an office and storage



“They looked like plain housewives but these ladies constructed their warehouse from scratch.”

-Noveda



area. It was here that the women used their carpentry, masonry and welding skills to construct the warehouse.

The MBA-WIDA was a beneficiary of the Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (PAHP). They have availed of the on-site training provided by the DAR.

Noveda said under the PAHP, the women of the cooperative underwent training on high value vegetable production and organic farming.

Today, in addition to their vegetable production, they are engaged in vermi-cast production, an organic fertilizer derived from African Night Crawler earthworms with technology provided by the DAR.

“They also produce bell peppers, green charcoal briquettes and organic red rice. The red rice has a high demand for the wellness and health conscious market, particularly the diabetics,” said Noveda.

They have diversified their interests: meat processing, and catering business. In line with this, they underwent trainings in food preparation and food handling, table skirting. They have also produced nuggets from vegetables. Their latest venture is the production of organic dishwashing liquid, which they started marketing in their area.

The MBA-WIDA is an epitome of empowerment, breaking traditional stereotypes. They have also learned to think of their future, access and mobilize resources to succeed their plans. They may have to deal with challenges along the way. But after the storm, they have charted their lives in their hands, and blazed new trails.

Cordillera Region**DAR advocates for the growth of farm communities in the Cordilleras**

Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Regional Director Atty. Marjorie P. Ayson recently visited remote agrarian reform communities (ARCs) in the Cordilleras to check the status of various infrastructure projects of the department.

Ayson said the validation and inspection of completed and on-going projects was conducted to identify problems in project implementation and to evaluate the impact of these projects to the farmers.

"This project inspection will help us overcome problems that will arise in the delivery of programs and projects of the department. After assessment of each project, we made action plans to resolve these obstacles," said Ayson.

In the array of validation and inspection of the numerous DAR projects in the provinces especially those not yet fully completed, problem solving sessions were done to ascertain the reasons for the delays and the appropriate remedial measures.

In Kalinga, the P43.50 million Bugnay-Buscalan-Butbut farm-to-market road in Tinglayan was completed just after the Ayson's visit on March 3, 2017. Likewise, the implementation of the P44.5 million

Eheb-Impugong road in Tinoc was very much affected by the effects of climate change where there is rapid rainfall and high humidity. Similarly, the unfinished works in the Wallayan-Abbatan-Bot-oan road in Buguias, Benguet is expected to be completed within this month.

"Notwithstanding, these road networks are still considered as functional or operational because while the projects are being done, these [infrastructure projects] are still being used by farmers and commuters," Ayson said.

The completed infrastructure projects like irrigation, post-harvest facilities and potable water supply were complemented with agricultural extension and business development services funded under the Agrarian Reform Community Enhancement Support Services (ARCESS).

In the implementation of the projects in the ARCs, a number of Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organizations (ARBOs) were selected as subject organizations in the implementation of the extension and business development services.

"Farm machines like tractors, threshers, shred-



ders and flatbed dryers were distributed to these ARBOs as additional support for the infrastructure projects," said Ayson.

In Ayson's recent visit in the remote Tinoc ARC in Ifugao, she assured the farmers that the DAR is there to help them improve their lives through infrastructures and agricultural development programs.

(Jane Toribio)

CARAGA Region**DAR grooms Agusan Norte ARBs to become leaders**

AT LEAST 150 farmer-beneficiaries from Agusan Norte develop their leadership abilities and learn the principles of cooperativism during a series of leadership and values re-orientation seminars held recently by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer II Andre Atega said the participants include cooperative leaders and officers, all of them are farmer-beneficiaries, from 23 agrarian reform beneficiaries' organizations (ARBOs) from the said province.

"The seminar aimed to strengthen the participants leadership capabilities and their organizations with the basic principles on cooperativism and to provide a means to build integrity with the mission and values of the cooperative. The DAR is intensifying its effort to help the coop leaders and officers to become an effective leader in their organization," Atega said.

DAR Coop Strengthening Coordinator Juanita B. Balibay said the agency in Agusan del Norte, under the leadership of PARPO Atega, and in partnership with the Propegemous, Inc., are working closely to empower the farmers and their organizations," Balibay added.

"Kami mapasalamatong kay nadugangan ang among kahibalo sa pagpalambo sa kooperatiba (we are thankful that we learned something to improve our cooperative)," said Manager Sergio Rensulat of Pinana-an, Ambacon and Mat-i ARB Cooperatives (PAM-ARBC).

The two-day leadership seminars, conducted in four sessions, were held in DAR's Agrarian Information and Marketing Center.

(Gil E. Miranda)



Davao Region**DAR turns over P30-M road project**

EFFORTS to improve the economic condition of farming communities in Kiblawan, Davao del Sur got a big boost as the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) recently turned-over a Php30 million road network project.

DAR OIC-Director III Venchito S. Mandap said the infrastructure project, which is tagged by the locals as the “longest road” covers six kilometers and now connects the barangays of Poblacion, Sto. Niño, Maraga-a and Panaglib.

“Roads are vital components in the department’s drive to spur rural development in farm communities,” said Mandap.

“The construction of the farm-to-market road would end the struggle of the residents in traversing the road, which used to be rocky and very muddy when it rains,” added Mandap.

The road network was implemented under the DAR’S Agrarian Reform Infrastructure Support Project III (ARISP III). It commenced construction in 2013 and was completed in 2015. This project is in collaboration with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and assisted by the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

Kiblawan Davao del Sur Municipal Mayor Carl Jason Rama, expressed his gratitude to the implementing agencies.

“This road would make transporting agri-products faster. We expect the trade and commerce here to greatly improve,” said Rama.

The turn-over ceremony was attended by DAR XI

OIC-Director III Venchito S. Mandap, OIC-Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer II Elmerito N. Gerigdig, DAR XI Program Beneficiaries Development Division employees, officials from the recipient barangays and the Department of Public Works and Highways of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental. ● (Ruth Maala)



A portion of the turn-over concrete road, tagged as the “longest road”



DAR OIC Director III Venchito Mandap, Kiblawan Municipal Mayor Carl Jason Rama and OIC-PARPO Elmerito Gerigdig sign the turn-over documents.

Ilocos Region**P2-M worth of livelihood support to boost Ilocos farmers’ groups**

THE LOCAL government of Ilocos Sur, with the assistance of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), recently provided funds to nine (9) agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs) to boost their livelihood projects.

The beneficiaries of the fund include Candon City Coconut Farmers Agrarian Reform (AR) Cooperative, Macati Rang-ay Farmers AR Cooperative, Metro Luba Coconut Farmers MPC and Ayusan Norte Pantay ARC MPC, which received P 300,000.00 respectively.

On the other hand, Sirmata AR Cooperative, Arnap Sunrise AR Community Multi-Purpose Cooperative, and Tay-ac AR Cooperative received P 200,000.00 each, while P100,000 were turned over to Southern Santiago AR Cooperative and Barbar ARBs MPC.

Ilocos Sur Governor Ryan Luis V. Singson, who led the awarding of the cheques, said the funds given to the organizations would surely boost their business enterprises.

The awarded funds will be used for the organizations’ enterprises like additional working capital for micro-finance and crop production, palay trading, re-lending, hog fattening and processing center improvement in compliance to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirement. A total of about 1,500 cooperative members will benefit from this financial assistance from



the DAR and the provincial government.

“These funds are given to the organizations as grant, however, we would impose stricter policy and regular monitoring of the operations,” Singson said.

The cheques were received by the officers and

management staff of each organization at the Provincial Capital of Ilocos Sur.

The event were also attended by Vice Governor Jeremiah C. Singson and some Provincial Board Members.

● (Rizalyn Ambida)

'The farmers' lawyer' Atty. David D. Erro

By Pinky Roque

ATTORNEY David Erro or Dave to his friends and family is a dedicated farmers' and peasants' lawyer. He humbly describe himself as a simple lawyer who helps those in need. And he has the chops to prove it.

Ever since his first professional job as one of the writer/technical staff of Senators Hersherson Alvarez and Nikki Coseteng, he has been exposed to the sad plight of farmers and peasants. Although he took his first two years of his Bachelor of Laws from San Beda College, he graduated from the Far Eastern University. His stint as writer/technical staff has given him a sense of duty to help the poor masses.

His work as researcher in the Philippine Peasant Institute and at the Integrated Rural Development Foundation further deepened his resolve to someday help as many farmers and peasants in the future. That day came when after passing the bar exams in 2002, he joined the Anakpawis Party-list as general counsel.

Now as Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Research Office, his experience as researcher, writer and lawyer has paid off. With his rich experience in dealing with the poor and oppressed farmers and peasants, he has been a major contributor in the formulation of the DAR's thrusts and policy directions and the department's fight to defend and assert the rights of farmers.

When asked how he feels about his job, he said he enjoys "magmuni-muni at magnilay-nilay kung paano mahusay na maipatupad ang thrusts and policy directions ng DAR. Masaya ang pakiramdam kapag ako ay nakakaisip ng mga bagay-bagay na magpapahusay na maipatupad ang mga iyon. Iyan po ang aking gawain sa kagawaran."

And to show you just how passionate he is to help our farmers, we asked him which famous person he would invite to dinner? "Si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte. Upang matalakay sa kanya ang konsepto ng tunay na repormang agraryo at makuha ang lubos na suporta niya sa thrusts and policy directions ng DAR."

On the lighter side, Atty. Erro loves listening to jazz and new wave. His favorite songs are 'Just Once' by James Ingram and 'Words' by the Bee Gees. "Ito kasi ang kabisado ko at kaya ng boses ko ayon sa iba," he humbly said.

He loves eating and cooking pinakbet Ilocano and



(2)



(1) Usec. Erro conferring with Secretary Mariano

(2) Usec. Erro explaining farmers' rights in a dialogue with farmer groups.

ginisang munggo. "Mas masarap kapag maraming dahon ng ampalaya at tinapa na galing sa Cagayan."

In his free time, he loves catching-up with his lovely wife Aicel and kids Adriana Denise, 11 and Aryan David, nine years old. "Mahilig kami magkwentuhan sa bahay at mag punta sa mall, kumain at mag-ikot-ikot doon."

We asked him what his life would be after DAR? "Isa pa rin pong simpleng abogado na tumutulong sa mga nangangailangan."

What is your idea of fun?

- Mapaligaya po ang iba.

How do you like to spend a rainy day?

- Kausap at kabiruan ang aking pamilya.

Which bad habits of other people drive you crazy?

- Magsalita ng walang katuturan.

What is one thing that not many people know about you?

- Mababa ang loob ko po at galante kapag mayroon.

What is the first thing you notice about someone when you first meet?

- Mga galaw ng mata po, alam ko kung nagsasabi ng totoo o hindi.

What is your favorite smell?

- Hininga ng sanggol na humihikab at natutulog.

What memory does it remind you of?

- Kapiling ang aking mga anak ng sila ay sanggol pa kasama ang aking asawa.

What is the one thing you would really like to own?

- Namuhay ako sa pagtulong dala ng aking prinsipyo kung kaya't bahay at lupa ang nais ko upang magkaroon ng kasiguruhan ang aking pamilya. ●

DAR employees help ...

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resources.

"No amount of disaster will stop us from delivering our services to our ARBs. Now, more than ever, is when they need our services the most," said Sangcopan.

Sangcopan together with her officials immediately formulated plans for relief and development efforts for farmers and employees affected by the Marawi crisis.

"DAR ARMM is exploring interventions in coming up with a comprehensive approach in uplifting the condition of its constituents although the firefight have yet to stop. In the time being, the agency is sourcing out funds to provide immediate relief to those affected, especially to its employees and beneficiaries. A continuous mechanism of reporting is also being mapped to seek out the beneficiaries in the different evacuation centers," Sangcopan said. (Pinky Roque with reports from the DAR-ARMM communications group) ●