

## Cooperatives in the Service for Western Visayas

“When Noah built the ark, it wasn’t raining”, truth be told, that most of us has not thought of “building our arks” in case of flood, aye? Almost everyone did not expect COVID-19 will reach our country this fast, thinking the virus will remain at bay- much like how people did not believe Noah that a flood is coming.

COVID-19 is highly contagious, it does not choose gender, economic status, it knows no age, it will definitely penetrate your system through close contact, whether you are healthy or not. As numbers are rising, Western Visayas is not spared, from this mare’s nest, because of this, Local Government Units have implemented Enhanced Community Quarantines (ECQ) to their respective territories. Citizens were advised to stay home, work were suspended and mass gatherings were cancelled. Non-essential businesses are currently on temporary closure and only banks, hospitals, grocery stores or establishments which offers essential commodities and services will remain open.

Under this circumstance, everyone is affected and the underprivileged communities are most seriously impinged. The Local Government Units are now mobilizing its budget for social welfare. Cooperative Development Authority, thru Chairman Orlando R. Ravanera, released a memorandum encouraging Cooperatives, to utilize its Community Development Fund, and Optional Fund if needed, to extend help and assistance in any forms.

The Cooperative Sector did not waste time, in Iloilo City for example, The Iloilo City Government Employees Credit Cooperative donated twenty (20) sacks of rice, the local government in Iloilo City has been putting-up community kitchens and giving out relief packs since the ECQ started.

Guimaras Electric Cooperative on the other hand, continued to serve with skeletal workforce in its physical office, has assigned workforce in its social media account and has set a hotline available 24/7 for immediate and urgent concerns of its consumers. And to make certain that the health and basic needs of its members be prioritized, it has extended its due date without penalty.

Same with Progressive Women Agrarian Reform Cooperative in Dumarao Capiz, it also made an extension to loan payments and waived its penalty, provided allowances to its employees, and extended its appreciation to frontliners who operate checkpoints along national highways in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Capiz by giving them, Calamansi Juice and Banana Chips- the cooperative’s products.



*Photo Credit: Tonyo Capiznon/FB*



Photo Credit: Libacao Dev't Coop./FB

While in Aklan, the frontliners- Libacao PNP, Libacao Infirmary and Libacao Rural Health Unit, enjoyed a free meal offered by Libacao Development Cooperative, in return concerned citizens gave them washable face masks for protection as they continue to serve, thru their satellite office.

Antique's very own Billionaire Cooperative, the Barbaza Multipurpose Cooperative have stretched-out its assistance to frontliners via branches in Iloilo and Aklan as a form of gratitude for their sacrifices. Donated cash for purchase of protective suits to Angel Salazar Memorial General Hospital in San Jose de Buenavista Antique. The cooperative has also have hand-made face shields for Rural Health Units, Hospitals and other frontliners.



Photo Credit: Barbaza Multipurpose Coop./FB



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In Negros Occidental, Kabankalan-Ilog Teachers and Employees Multipurpose Cooperative, has felt the need of the community. They allocated an amount for food, distributed in depressed areas of Kabankalan City and La Carlota City. They have also turned-over to Kabankalan City Mayor Pedro P. Zayco Jr, groceries for frontliners.

These are just few of the many cooperatives, taking an extra mile to contribute to the spontaneous solidarity of Western Visayas to fight the spread of COVID-19, in order to heal as one. As the old adage goes: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts", Cooperation is the way!

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