

## ECGEM-MPC: The Cooperative that Proactively Responds to the Community in Health Emergencies and Disasters

In unprecedented times of uncertainty, the Escalante City Government Employees and Community Multi-Purpose Cooperative upholds cooperative values of solidarity, social responsibility and genuine care for the community.

Registered in 2008 and with 1,251 members at present, both members and officers raised funds and combined it with the coop's Community Development Fund amounting of P40,032 to donate rice and grocery items to non-members affected by the lockdown brought about by the pandemic especially the trisikad (padyak) drivers. These packed goods were distributed to the beneficiaries last March 29, 2020 at ECGEM-MPC's office. In addition, to ensure that their members who engage in backyard hog raising continue to raise their animals with sufficient supply of feeds, ECGEM-MPC personally delivered these agricultural inputs to the former as travel restrictions made the procurement of supplies more costly than before, especially in the coastal barangays. ECGEM-MPC also secured stocks and established outlets so that its sari-sari store owner members can have easy access to grocery supplies.

As the only approved lending conduit of the Department of Agriculture Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) and under the latter's Expanded Survival and Recovery Aid (SURE COVID-19) Project, ECGEM-MPC released up to P25,000.00 to marginalized farmers and fisherfolk (MSFFs) on June 20 and June 26, 2020, respectively. This financial loan is payable in ten (10) years without interest. Aside from this grant, the ACPC also tapped ECGEM-MPC to extend loans to MSFFs and mango producer through its Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) Program, for which the coop released loans into four (4) batches in Escalante City and the Municipality of Toboso. Loans under this program are payable depending on the commodity or project, amounting to P50,000 for short-term commodities and P150,000 for long-gestating communities, with a low interest rate. Complying with the Bayanihan Law, the coop also suspended the loan repayment of their micro-entrepreneur members.



In total, ECGEM MPC has reached out to their members and other beneficiaries in all 21 barangays of Escalante City, Negros Occidental, even utilizing social media to inform them that they can count on the cooperative during times of financial instability. "The cooperative has remained open during the pandemic and we are proud to say that during the lockdown, we have served our members heartily," Chairperson of the Board Elean Buenavista recalls.

The cooperative did not only manifest the cooperative spirit and concern for vulnerable people on this pandemic but also when Typhoon Ulysses devastated Cagayan later this year. With its logistics partners providing free services, ECGEM-MPC also donated nine (9) boxes of shampoo, bath soap and toothpaste to calamity victims.

The economic slowdown and losses experienced by Filipino citizens in 2020 are incomparable to any calamities experienced before; however, with the cooperative movement making positive impacts on the most vulnerable sectors of society and with the responsiveness of ECGEM-MPC as an example, cooperators shall overcome all difficulties.

