

## **Asec. Villanueva Consults Bicol Cooperatives, Secures Commitment of Local Government Officials**

Did he leave his heart in Bicol?

Asec. Vidal D. Villanueva III traversed the mainland provinces of Bicol in his sincere desire to bring the Finance Cluster's services closer to the cooperatives. His itinerary spanned through the four provinces of mainland Bicol, starting off with Camarines Norte and ending in Sorsogon, which is at the southern tip of the region and the gateway to the Visayas. He also touched base with select local government leaders and in so doing reinforced the already good working relationship between the Cooperative Development Authority—Region V Office and these local government units.

Regional Director Ma. Lourdes P. Pacao accompanied Asec. Villanueva through all the four provinces. The Cooperative Development Specialists joined them in their respective provinces: Erlinda Valera and Anthony Galvan at Camarines Norte; Maricho Pobre at Naga City and Camarines Sur; Ramon Mendizabal and Cristin Caño at Albay and Tabaco City; Danilo Mendizabal and Mary Grace Bañares at Sorsogon City.

The CDA group also had "close encounters" with local government officials. Governor Edgardo Tallado of Camarines Norte reassured his continuing commitment to provide the required financial support to the proposed Camarines Norte Credit Surety Fund Cooperative. He bared his initiative to create the provincial cooperative office with a full-time cooperative officer and support staff.



promotion and development CDA. Her other commitment to more sectors of her constituents beneficiaries, solo parents, women, padyak and motorized tricycle drivers and operators, into the ambit of the cooperative movement by organizing them into cooperatives.



For her part, Vice Mayor Rosa Mia King of Daet, Camarines Norte reiterated her full support to the program of the CDA was to bring that included 4P's

Naga City Mayor Nelson Legacion met with the CDA group in his office. During the brief but very productive meeting, the City Mayor reiterated his support to cooperatives and to the CDA: Mr. Jun Mongoso of the Metro PESO was named the point person on matters pertaining to the proposed Naga City Credit Surety Fund Cooperative. Other matters relating to cooperative affairs were to be coordinated with the City Cooperative Officer JB Buendia and SP Committee on Cooperatives chaired by Councilor Oying Rosales. Mayor Legacion also allayed the CDA's fear of eviction from its present office location at Civic Center Compound expressing "high hopes" that the highest court will eventually rule in favor of the LGU of Naga.

At Sorsogon City, Provincial Board Member Arze Glipo, Head of the SP Committee on Livelihood and Cooperatives, also met with the CDA group. She later joined the consultation with cooperatives in the province of Sorsogon. Through her generosity, the group was allowed to use the SP Session Hall as venue of the activity.

The consultations with cooperatives belonging to the Finance Cluster spanned the four provinces of Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, and Sorsogon in three days from December 2-4, 2020.

The Albay leg of the consultations covered the following agenda: a) gathering of issues and concerns from cooperatives and offering practical solutions and to make official follow-ups to concerned government agencies and other offices.; and b) rehabilitation of ailing cooperative at Tabaco City utilizing the Big Brother-Small Brother strategy. The identified Big Brother was Gubat St. Anthony Cooperative which was represented by Atty. Bien Larosa and the recipient Small Brother was St. John Development Cooperative. Many strategies were proposed like management assistance from the Big Brother. The Small Brother coop was represented by its Manager and two members of the Board of Directors who promised to take up the proposal with the Board of Directors for decision. Atty. Larosa also gathered data and information from the coop representatives. On the part of the CDA, Asec. Villanueva recommended a Task Force for the rehabilitation efforts. During the consultations, a follow-up on the registration of the Albay Mayon CSF Cooperative was made. Ms. Rafaelita Nicoleta, Chief of the Provincial Cooperative and Enterprise Development Office of Albay province, explained the reservations of members in proceeding with the registration. She cited the financial aspects of operations viz-a-viz the interest rates charged by LBP and the additional surety fee to be paid to the CSF Coop. To hear from more members of the proposed Albay Mayon CSF Cooperative, Asec. Villanueva suggested a virtual meeting on December 15, 2020.

The Camarines Norte leg was held at the Mabini Colleges Compound, Daet. Issues and concerns were gathered from cooperatives. Practical solutions were offered and official follow-ups to concerned government agencies and other offices were made. PCDC Chairman Dr. Henry Orbita of the LBP and Daet MCDC Chairman Eduardo de la Torre joined the activity. Dr. Merle Fontanilla, chairperson of the Mabini Colleges MP Cooperative, delivered the consolidated issues and concerns from the cooperatives in Camarines Norte. A meeting with Governor Edgardo Tallado was also held. On a different level of cooperation, Asec. Villanueva proposed a sister-province engagement between Camarines Norte and Cebu province. With the affirmative nod from the governor, he volunteered to bridge the negotiation with Governor Gwen Garcia.

The Camarines Sur leg comprised of an early morning meeting with the City Mayor Nelson Legacion and the gathering of issues and concerns from cooperatives. Just like in Camarines Norte, practical solutions were offered and official follow-ups to concerned government agencies and other offices were made. The activity was held at the JMR Museum in Naga City. Twelve primary cooperatives and one federation alternately made their issues and concerns known to the government agencies and entities that were present. Asec. Villanueva narrated how his work experience with Cebu CFI Credit Cooperative might help solve some of their problems, particularly in improving the collection of loan payments.

The last leg at Sorsogon focused on the gathering of issues and concerns from the cooperatives, offering of practical solutions, and making official follow-ups to concerned government agencies and other offices. The unique issues and concerns of Sorsogon cooperatives were the absence of trained cooperative bookkeepers and the presence of four different cooperatives among employees of the Local Government of Sorsogon.

Director Pacao proposed a solution to the first issue ---- the establishment of a partnership between PCDC and the Sorsogon State College for the On-Job-Training completion of accountancy students in the service of cooperatives.

Asec. Vidal recommended the merger or consolidation of the four different cooperatives within the LGU in order to unify the employees in negotiating for better privileges from the LGU.

All these consultations were done with strict adherence to existing health protocols and IATF Guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Did Asec. Vidal D. Villanueva leave his heart in Bicol?  
He promised to return during the first quarter of 2021 !!!

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