



Changing Lives, Building Communities

How the PAWFED helps abused women rebuild their future

According to the 2017 National Demographic and Health Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority, one in four women experienced sexual, physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from their husband or partner. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) reported that women aged 14 to 49 were victimized by gender-based violence primarily due to unequal power relations between men and women.

The social norm rules that men are above women as men are considered the providers, and women are merely subordinates. This culture provides for a surrounding that fosters violence and harassment against women.

Violence against women (VAW) anchors the formation of a non-government organization in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte called Paglingkawas Women Federation (PAWFED).



Ms. Blenda Desierto, Chief Operating Officer

PAWFED serves as a support group for abused women by giving them legal assistance, agency referrals, and psychological counseling.

“Women’s over-dependence on their husbands can result in domestic abuse. After assisting the victims, they still go back to their partners, and the cycle of abuse goes on,” said Ms. Blenda Desierto, Chief Operating Officer of PAWFED.

Victims of abuse who sought help from the organization found new paths to take and a safe space that could help them heal from the trauma of their experiences.

Jenny [not her real name] once suffered abuse from her husband. She narrated, “He had another woman, and he would beat me. I could not bear it anymore when he brought the woman to our home, and that is when I asked PAWFED for help.” The PAWFED helped Jenny in filing a case against her husband.

Claire [not her real name] also ran to the group’s shelter to seek intervention for his partner’s mistreatment. “I was battered with no relatives to turn to at that time. After ten years of abuse, the Federation was the answer to my prayers.”

The PAWFED realized that to truly free these women from the shackles of their trauma, they must help them rebuild their livelihoods. Thus, the association requested assistance under the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) from the DOLE Region X.



Livelihood training and seminars for the members



Member & client livelihood capitalization

In 2017, the Department granted them ₱300,000.00 worth of assistance that they used to provide training and seminars for their members, eventually leading them to produce ready-to-sell products for their established consumer store.



they now called *Merkado sa PAWFED*. With these enhancements, the Federation can already source their products from direct suppliers of goods and local farmers and fisherfolks, which not only help their members but also afford their community low-priced commodities.

Ms. Elenita Ayeng, a regular customer, said that the *Merkado* helped her manage her family’s food budget. She said she used to spend ₱6,000.00 on their monthly budget, but with the store’s competitive prices, ₱3,500.00 is now enough for her family.

The PAWFED also organizes weekly *tabo* [flea market] to help local businesses sell their produce. It gives the community better shopping options.

Because of these initiatives, the group’s annual gross sales increased from ₱124,245.00 in 2020 to ₱336,133.00 in 2021, leading to their growth to five clusters, 32 groups, 590 members, and 21 mini-merkado under their management.

The members also improved their skills and now can produce 38 different products from their initial 3-product offering.

In addition, the PAWFED has assisted 51 domestic violence victims and continues to guide them in their recovery. The organization became more than just a livelihood project but a life-changing movement.

They also tapped local fisherfolks and farmers for their supply of natural products to sell at the store.

Seeing the growth of the business, the DOLE provided them with enhancement assistance worth ₱250,000.00, used to buy freezers and other equipment for the store.

Expansion and renovation of their store followed as the group’s business profit increased, which

as the group’s business profit increased, which



Ms. Desierto said, “We want this legacy to continue that is why we created the Paglingkawas Women Federation.”

“From formation, enhancement, to restoration, the DOLE Region 10 is here to guide them every step of the way. The PAWFED is an inspiring testament to how kindness and hard work can truly change lives and how it can change a community,” said DOLE X’s Regional Director Albert E. Gutib.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairperson: **Director Ahmma Charisma Lobrin-Satumba**

Editor-in-Chief: **Elisa A. Cruz**

Content: **Maria Geneva R. Bassig, DOLE X**

Photos: **DOLE X**

Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns

DOLE Annex Building, Cabildo Street corner Muralla Street, Intramuros, Manila

8527-3000 loc. 319

bwsc@dole.gov.ph

www.bwsc.dole.gov.ph

<http://www.facebook.com/bwsc.dole>