



DSWD

Department of Social Welfare and Development

YAKAP BAYAN

COMPENDIUM OF STORIES



Message from the Secretary

Eliminating problems that hinder the empowerment of our people has been a top priority of the government under the leadership of President Rodrigo R. Duterte. Apart from fighting corruption and criminality, the government has been exerting massive efforts to fight illegal drugs and building the resiliency of Filipinos against its ill effects.

Over the years, the government has made monumental strides in achieving the goal by adopting a whole-of-government and a whole-of-nation approach in attaining a drug-free nation.

On the part of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), our contribution to the fight against illegal drugs is the empowerment of local government units (LGUs) and other stakeholders in the provision of aftercare and support services to Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs (RPWUDs) after they undergo rehabilitation. Our Yakap Bayan Program provides a holistic intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families in their journey to recovery and towards their social reintegration.

Yakap Bayan is part of the DSWD's mandate to provide technical assistance and resource augmentation to LGUs in the implementation of social welfare and development programs and

services. Beyond fulfilling our technical assistance and resource augmentation mandate, however, our efforts are also directed towards our desire to save more lives from drugs and to protect the welfare of the Filipino people, especially the youth.

Our collective efforts have helped renew the lives of many RPWUDs in different parts of the country. The stories featured in this compendium are just a few of the many narratives of transformation that are yet to be told and chronicled. These help uncover the realities our RPWUDs face as they tread on the road to recovery.

While the government has been actively fighting the illegal drug menace in the country, it cannot achieve this goal on its own. We need all the help that we can get to overcome the drug problem that has been plaguing our country. Thus, I enjoin you to work with us so that we can come out victorious on the war against illegal drugs.

Mayroong lakas sa pagkakaisa. Sama-sama tayong kumilos nang may malasakit at labanan ang mga humahadlang sa kaunlaran ng ating bayan.

ROLANDO JOSELITO D. BAUTISTA
DSWD Secretary



Message from the Undersecretary

The road towards change is never easy. After undergoing rehabilitation, Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs (RPWUDs) are confronted with a wide range of personal, social, and economic challenges which may affect their reintegration into their communities. These challenges are rooted in the stigma that has long been attached to illegal drugs. People's negative attitudes and behaviors against RPWUDs can be a significant barrier towards their recovery. These can negatively impact RPWUDs' self-esteem and mental health, and worse, affect their will to continue receiving treatment, resulting in relapse.

As a member of the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs, the DSWD focuses on the return of RPWUDs to their families and communities after undergoing rehabilitation. To ensure RPWUDs' successful reintegration, the Department provides a holistic intervention to assist them in their journey to recovery through the Yakap Bayan Program.

This compendium features inspiring stories of RPWUDs who have chosen the path to sobriety and were provided with aftercare and support services by the DSWD, other government

agencies, and local government units, as well as private groups and organizations. The stories offer a peek into their world and a glimpse of their minds and thoughts, helping us understand them better. The compendium also offers some updates on the implementation of the Yakap Bayan program of the DSWD.

May these inspiring stories encourage us to look at RPWUDs in a different light and beyond their past. More than giving an inspiration, may their stories also ignite actions to help in transforming the lives of our fellow citizens who had once gone astray.

Let us continue to work together towards building a nation that is free from drugs.

DANILO G. PAMONAG
DSWD Undersecretary for Social Welfare and Development



Foreword from the Chairperson

DSWD Yakap Bayan Technical Working Group

Recognizing the extent of the drug problem in the country, President Rodrigo R. Duterte launched a massive campaign against illegal drugs with the goal of saving human lives and achieving a comfortable, peaceful, and just society for all Filipinos.

The government does not just view the country's drug problem as a law enforcement and criminality issue, but as a health problem with social consequences. While it continues to implement a crackdown of illegal drug suppliers, producers, peddlers, and users, it has been exerting parallel efforts in helping those who voluntarily surrendered to renew their lives, return to their families, and bounce back as productive members of their communities.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as member of the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs and as the lead agency in social protection, has been implementing the Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention since 2017. Yakap Bayan is an inter-agency collaborative framework which weaves together all existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the rehabilitation, aftercare, reintegration, and provision of support services for Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs (RPWUDs). It aims to transform them from former drug dependents into productive citizens and community leaders.

Several local governments at the provincial, city, and municipal levels have adopted the Framework to provide aftercare and support services to RPWUDs in

their localities. In order to replicate the Yakap Bayan practice and its success all over the Philippines, the Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, a holistic model of intervention for LGUs to assist RPWUDs in their journey to recovery and social reintegration.

Through the Yakap Bayan, we embrace RPWUDs, welcome them back into the fold of society, and guide them towards the road to their full recovery and successful reintegration to their communities. Our efforts under Yakap Bayan are also an investment for the future. We have waged the war against illegal drugs with the goal to provide our children with a peaceful and safe environment that is conducive to their growth and overall wellbeing.

Patuloy nating palakasin ang pamilya at komunidad, at 'yakapin' pabalik sa ating 'bayan' ang ating mga kapwa Pilipinong nagsusumikap na makapagbagong-buhay. Magtulongan tayo at sama-sama nating bawiin ang ating bayan mula sa droga.

JOSE ANTONIO R. HERNANDEZ

*DSWD Undersecretary for Policy and Plans
Chairperson, Yakap Bayan Technical Working
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DSWD Sec. Bautista enjoins employees to contribute to Department's efforts in helping recovering persons who used drugs



Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rolando Joselito D. Bautista has enjoined the employees of the Department to contribute to efforts in reaching out to recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) and helping them get back into the fold of society.

The move is part of further strengthening DSWD's advocacy of transforming the lives of former drug dependents from being surrenderers into advocates, volunteers, and eventually, productive community leaders through the Yakap Bayan Framework of Interventions.

The Yakap Bayan Framework is an inter-agency collaborative framework which weaves together all existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the rehabilitation, aftercare, reintegration, and provision of support services for RPWUDs.

DSWD has been championing Yakap Bayan since 2017, providing technical assistance and capacity-building for social workers of various local government units (LGUs) and partner-agencies for better implementation of aftercare, reintegration, and support services for RPWUDs and their families. The Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach.

Apart from the capacity-building and technical assistance to the local implementers, the Department also facilitates a wide range of services for RPWUDs and their families. These include the provision of financial assistance (educational, medical, and burial), Cash-for-Work, Food-for-Work, livelihood assistance for qualified RPWUDs through DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program, and referral to Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for skills training, among others.

To further help the RPWUDs, DSWD is involving its employees in its anti-drug efforts and initiatives. Sec. Bautista encouraged the Department's employees to participate in activities conducted under the community-based rehabilitation programs of various LGUs. They may help by volunteering their time in different reformation camps or reflection centers for RPWUDs, such as the Pagbabago at Pag-asa Reflection Camp in Lucban, Quezon; Ifugao Reflection Camp in Kiangnan, Ifugao; and Itigil at Talikuran Na ang Droga, Ngayon Na! (ITAN) Reflection Camp in Santol, La Union, among many others. They may also share goods and donate other useful materials to these centers.

According to the Secretary, involving employees in the Department's anti-drug initiatives will help set a good example among citizens and hopes to inspire them to support the government's efforts of rehabilitating RPWUDs and reintegrating them back into the society.

The welfare chief underscored the importance of families and communities as the primary giver of support to help RPWUDs start their lives anew. According to him, the support of ordinary citizens is also important when it comes to monitoring and maintaining efforts to protect communities from the ill effects of illegal drugs.

“The welfare chief underscored the importance of families and communities as the primary giver of support to help RPWUDs start their lives anew. According to him, the support of ordinary citizens is also important when it comes to monitoring and maintaining efforts to protect communities from the ill effects of illegal drugs.”

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Former drug dependent finds more than just physical healing in this reflection camp

For the province of Ifugao in the Cordillera Region, every problem, even the problem on drugs, has a solution.

As the campaign of the present administration against illegal drugs intensified, it became clearer that the extent of the drug problem around the country was greater beyond expectation. Unprepared and not fully knowledgeable on how to deal with the problem, officials were alarmed when thousands of drug users and pushers surrendered.

Despite the enormity of the problem, Ifugao was undaunted and showed its determination to deal with the crisis. On September 19, 2016, it established the Ifugao Reflection Camp (IRC), a facility that enables drug surrenderers to engage in a community-based rehabilitation program. It also provides aftercare services that would help them stay sober, productive, and eventually be fully integrated with their families and communities. IRC, in fact, became a model replicated by other provinces in the country.

The IRC later inspired the framework of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Yakap Bayan, a holistic intervention to assist recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) in their recovery journey and to facilitate their social reintegration. Through the Yakap Bayan, former drug dependents are transformed into community volunteers, and eventually advocates and community leaders who contribute to nation building.

The IRC, however, is not just the ordinary halfway house with a structured way of living for its wards. Instead, its design resembles a camping type set-up where a maximum of 50 individuals every week per round can be accommodated for six months. IRC is located in an enclosed compound of the old Ifugao Provincial Jail at Tiger Hill in Baguinge, Kiangon. It was initiated and is being maintained by the Provincial Anti-Drug Abuse Council (PADAC) through the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) as lead.

For many former drug dependents who have been transformed, IRC is where stories of hope, healing, and reconciliation bloom.

Watcher (not his real name), 40, and a father of five, who was one of the IRC campers can attest to this as he narrated his own story of change after undergoing through the rehabilitation program of the reflection camp.

A Story to Tell: A life destroyed

On one occasion, Watcher was invited to cook and help for a big wedding celebration. Seeing him tired and exhausted from the event, two of his peers called him to join them for a break outside. He followed them without knowing what they would be doing. His peers then started pulling out something from their bags. It was methamphetamine (meth), popularly known as "shabu." They prodded him to try, saying he would not feel exhausted after using it. Feeling helpless, he started lighting the foil and running the meth three times. True enough, he started to regain his

energy and became more alert and active.

After that day, Watcher felt that he needed the same quick relief. This "need" became stronger and he did not mind contributing a hundred pesos for shabu during every session. Initially, he only had one session every two weeks. Eventually, the drug took over his life for about a year without his family knowing about it.

When President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was sworn into office, he immediately declared a war on drugs. From several lists, thousands were warned to surrender. Watcher, keeping a low profile, had ignored it as he thought he was not on the list.

Then one day, someone called and asked him to surrender. Upon arriving home, a barangay official was already waiting for him. After a brief talk, he was then escorted to the municipal hall. It was only three days later that his family members learned that he was using shabu, which came as an unpleasant surprise to all of them.

His family became cold towards him. He was ignored, and no one wanted to talk to him. Despite this, he tried his best to win back their love and attention, but to no avail. Watcher did not know what to do; he was ignored by the people who meant the world to him.

Turning Point: Redemption

Then, a turning point came for Watcher. He was invited to attend the IRC program. He soon became one of the campers. At the IRC,

each camper is obliged to attend and complete the 6-month program. For each month, they will be staying at the camp for a week and then back to their communities for the other three weeks.

The program includes interventions such as: detoxification (physical fitness exercises and dietary management); biomedical mitigation and monitoring; behavioral intervention (personality development, spiritual counseling, therapeutic community meetings, cognitive behavioral therapy, and family behavioral therapy); and community services (advocacy on anti-drugs, assisting in search and rescue operations during disasters, clearing and cleaning of drainages and roads).

Watcher actively participated in the various interventions. Aside from regularly joining the activities, Watcher also helped in maintaining the cleanliness of the camp. This, he said, was his way of reciprocating the kindness being shown to him by the staff of IRC.

As weeks passed, his family saw his commitment to reform his ways. They started accepting him again. In fact, they began to attend the family sessions that are conducted every last day of the week-long stay at the camp. His daughter even told him that she was thankful because even though he got involved in drugs, he never harmed them. After hearing this, he promised to never go back to that life again.

"Ngayon po ay lubos ang aking saya dahil bumalik na po ang respeto sa akin ng aking mga mahal sa buhay at muli ay may masasandalan na naman sila na ama ng tahanan," Watcher said.



DSWD strengthens Yakap Bayan for recovering persons who used drugs; encourages LGUs to adopt the program

“*The Department continues to call on other LGUs across the nation to adopt the Yakap Bayan to efficiently provide services to drug surrenderers and assist them to become effective community volunteers and leaders who are able to contribute to nation building.*”

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) continues to strengthen its advocacy to turn recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) into productive members of society through its Yakap Bayan Framework of Interventions.

Since 2017, DSWD, through Yakap Bayan, has worked closely with various line agencies and local government units (LGUs) to harmonize all existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the transformation, rehabilitation, reintegration, and provision of support systems for drug surrenderers, their families, and their communities. The Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, which provides a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs

and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach.

In the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), for instance, DSWD CAR, as head of the Regional Social Development Committee (RSDC), has recommended for the passage of a resolution urging all LGUs in the region to adopt the Yakap Bayan Framework which was subsequently approved by the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Cordillera Regional Peace and Order Council (CRPOC).

In terms of support measures for drug surrenderers in the region, DSWD through its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) has provided them with livelihood assistance worth P1,626,050 for their entrepreneurial projects such as: Community-Based Skills Training on Goat Raising in Kibungan, Benguet; Skills Training on Native Chicken Production cum Construction of Chicken Coop in Sagada, Mt. Province; Cash for Building Livelihood Asset for the Improvement of Sitio Bue to Wala farm to market road in Paracelis, Mt. Province; Bee Keeping in Bontoc, Mt. Province; vegetable farming in Bauko, Mt. Province; and hog raising in Danglas, Abra.

In addition, DSWD CAR also conducted technical assistance sessions in various municipalities in the region. As a result, the



municipalities of Tuba and Bakun in Benguet and Luna in Apayao passed a resolution and forged a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with DSWD to replicate completed social technologies related to the prevention of drug abuse.

Some of the social technologies which will be replicated are the Family Drug Abuse Prevention Program and the Special Drug Education Center.

Moreover, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) held a training on “Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad Program” which highlights a relapse prevention module to 50 LGUs and 77 Municipal Links in CAR.

As of April 2019, DSWD CAR has conducted 13 technical assistance sessions to Municipal and Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (M/BADAC) members in the municipalities of Tuba, Bakun, Buguias, Tublay, Kibungan, and Kabayan in Benguet; Luna and Flora in Apayao; Dolores, Bucay, and Peñarubia in Abra; and Bauko and Paracelis in Mt. Province.

Technical assistance and resource augmentation were also provided to the Provincial/Municipal Anti-Drug Abuse Council (P/MADAC) of various LGUs for them to start their community-based rehabilitation services. These LGUs include the province of Ifugao; municipalities of Bauko, Bontoc, Tadian, Natonin, Sadanga, Paracelis, and Sagada in Mt. Province; Baguio City; municipalities of Luna, Flora, Pudtol, Sta. Marcela, Kabugao, Calanasan, and Conner in the Province of Apayao; municipalities of Itogon, Kibungan, Tublay, Tuba, La Trinidad, Sablan, Atok, Buguias, Kabayan, Kapangan, and Bakun in Benguet Province; municipalities of Danglas, Manado, Bangued, Pilar, Penarubia, Langiden, Sallapadan, Licuan-Baay, San Quintin, San Isidro, Bucay, Dolores, and Villaviciosa in Abra Province; and the municipalities of Lubuagan, Tanudan, Rizal, Pasil, Balbalan, and Tabuk City in Kalinga Province.

The Department continues to call on other LGUs across the nation to adopt the Yakap Bayan to efficiently provide services to drug surrenderers and assist them to become effective community volunteers and leaders who are able to contribute to nation building.

No More Going Back: A recovering person who used drugs' journey to regain trust and respect of his family and community

“
**Hinding-hindi na
ako babalik sa dati.**
”

A barangay tanod now, Frederick Catibog, 39, is no longer a picture of a person who once succumbed to the effects of drug addiction.

Villagers in Barangay San Diego in Lian, Batangas used to call him an irresponsible husband and father. They also often remarked that his family lived in a house made of cardboard, nipa leaves, and scavenged galvanized iron sheets, yet he could still afford to buy drugs and alcohol.

People were aloof to him and, worse, afraid of him and his family.

Today, Frederick walks the streets of their barangay with dignity. He feels accepted and respected by members of his community all because of the support and opportunities provided to him by the government and concerned individuals, which made him a changed man.

“Naghahanap-buhay ako nang maayos at ibinubuhos ko ang lahat ng oras ko para sa pamilya ko. Gusto kong mapagtapos ang mga anak ko at mamulat sila sa magandang asal,” he shared with pride.

Learning from past mistakes

His wife, Jenny, 29, could not hide her feelings when she recalled their situation as a result of Frederick's addiction to his vices.

“Pangingisda ang pinagkakakitaan niya dati. Pagdating niya sa bahay, magbibigay lang siya ng 40 pesos. Minsan wala pa. Kulang na kulang pa iyon para sa pagkain ng apat naming mga anak sa maghapon,” Jenny shared.

Frederick recalled that he did not mind spending around a thousand pesos in a day for his vices. He would even accept construction jobs to fund his addictions.

On the other hand, Jenny would find ways so that their children could have something to eat.

“Minsan, naglalabada ako para kumita ng pera. ‘Pag walang wala talaga, nanghihingi ako ng bigas sa mga kapatid n’ya,” Jenny continued. She admitted that she held a grudge against her husband who seemed to care more about his bad habits than their family.

In 2011, their family became a beneficiary of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program which is being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The cash grants from the program are a great help in meeting the health and school needs of their children, especially when Jenny no longer expected support from her husband.

“Sinisiguro ko pong diretsong naibibili ng gamit ng mga bata at pambayad sa school ang natatanggap namin sa Pantawid. Hindi ko na pinoproblema ang pang-araw-araw nilang baon,” shared Jenny.

Through the monthly Family Development Sessions



Frederick Catibog, a resident of Brgy. San Diego in Lian, Batangas Province is pictured with his wife and kid. Frederick is grateful for the opportunities provided to him through the various interventions from different government agencies. He is now a barangay tanod and has a boat for his livelihood and a new home for his family.

which she attends regularly as part of her co-responsibilities as a grantee of the program, Jenny has learned a lot of things, particularly in raising her children well and in maintaining a healthy relationship with Frederick.

“Hinikayat ko na po siyang magbago. Sinasabi ko sa kanya lagi na huwag na niyang hayaang lumaki pa ang mga anak namin na puro pagbibisyo lang niya ang nakikita,” she said.

Thankfully, Frederick heeded her advice and started to change his ways.

Gaining his family's trust and the community's respect

As its contribution to the government's anti-illegal drug campaign, DSWD leads the implementation of the Yakap Bayan Program, which provides a holistic intervention to assist Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs (RPWUDs) in their recovery journey and to facilitate their social reintegration. It entails the provision of support services such as counselling sessions, health and fitness therapy, spiritual interventions, skills training, and capacity-building.

Frederick was one of the 99 residents of Barangay San Diego who surrendered to the police and were assisted through the Yakap Bayan.

For Frederick, that experience was life-changing, particularly when various interventions, such as cash-for-work, skills training, and livelihood assistance from the national and local governments as well as from private organizations were provided to surrenderers like him.

Frederick was thankful when a private organization gave him a boat which he now uses to earn for his family.

Aside from the boat, his family was also a beneficiary of a housing project of the local government receiving P10,000 worth of construction supplies. Finally, Frederick can start building a more decent and safer house for his family.

“Tuwang-tuwa po kami ngayon kasi hindi na kami nanghihingi ng pagkain. Lahat ng kinikita n’ya, napupunta na para sa pamilya namin,” shared Jenny, who added that Frederick is also able to spend more time to bond with their children.

What Frederick is also grateful for is that as a barangay tanod, he is able to help in the anti-illegal drug campaign of the government by working together with the police in ensuring that there will be no more cases of addiction in their community.

“Pinakamalaking bagay na din po para sa akin ‘yung pinagkatiwalaan akong magsilbi sa barangay namin. Yung maging barangay tanod ako. Hindi ko po iniisip ‘yung sweldo ko dito, ang mahalaga sa akin ay maipakita ko sa mga kabarangay ko na ako ay nagbago na,” he said.

Chasing dreams for the children

Frederick vows to continue working hard to ensure that all his children finish their studies and, hopefully, find gainful employment in the future.

“Hinding-hindi na ako babalik sa dati,” he committed.

With this assurance of Frederick, Jenny could not help but shed tears once more. This time, however, they are tears of joy for finally finding peace of mind when it comes to the future of their children.

“Mas panatag na po ako ngayon na alam kong nagtutulungan kaming mapabuti ang aming mga anak,” she ended.

From recovering persons who used drugs to microentrepreneurs: How a La Union town transformed its drug surrenderers into productive citizens



Furniture Making
DSWD Livelihood Project

Finding jobs and securing gainful employment after undergoing rehabilitation can be challenging for recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs). Some have “spotty” work histories, while others have criminal records—lowering their chances of being considered for jobs by prospective employers due to the social stigma attached to being former drug dependents. Unemployment then becomes a reason for relapse with drug surrenderers going back to the vicious cycle they were once at.

This is why, it is very important for RPWUDs to be provided not just with rehabilitation services, but also skills training and livelihood assistance to help them secure gainful employment or establish a steady source of income that would aid in their full recovery.

The Municipality of Santol, La Union understands the plight of RPWUDs, especially when it comes to finding jobs and obtaining sources of livelihood

after rehabilitation. Following the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s (DSWD) Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention, the town has helped its RPWUDs renew their lives, transforming them into productive members of society, specifically, as microentrepreneurs.

The “Katipuneros” of Santol

In Santol, RPWUDs undergoing community-based rehabilitation program are called “Katipuneros,” a term referring to the members of the Philippine revolutionary society Kataas-taasan, Kagalang-galangang, Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (Katipunan). The surrenderers were called as such because, similar to the Katipuneros of Katipunan, they are fighting a battle—a fight against the effects of illegal drugs in their lives.

The Katipuneros undergo rehabilitation at the Itigil at Talikuran Na ang Droga, Ngayon Na! (ITAN) Reflection

Camp, which was established by the local government unit (LGU) in 2017. ITAN Reflection Camp has been following DSWD’s Yakap Bayan Framework in providing aftercare and reintegration services to former drug dependents in the town.

The Yakap Bayan Framework is an inter-agency collaborative framework which weaves together all existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the rehabilitation, aftercare, reintegration, and provision of support services for RPWUDs. It aims to capacitate RPWUDs and turn them into active and productive members of society, specifically, as leaders in their communities. The Framework has now been transformed into the Yakap Bayan Program, a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach. It entails the provision of aftercare and support services such as counselling sessions, health and fitness therapy, spiritual interventions, skills training, and capacity-building. To ensure successful reintegration in their communities, families and communities are engaged in relationship restoration sessions, community reconciliation sessions, and in the reintegration planning with the RPWUDs.

Livelihood support

Part of the reintegration program implemented by the LGU of Santol is the provision of capital assistance to RPWUDs who underwent various skills training to help them start or improve their chosen income-generating activities.

In April 2018, DSWD Field Office I, through its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), granted a total of P158,000 seed capital fund to the 65 members of Pagsadagan nga Agturong Raniag ken Ekonomiya (PARE) SLP Association, which is composed of RPWUDs who underwent rehabilitation in the town. The grant helped fund the association’s various projects, including furniture and soft broom making, bonsai beads making, and barako coffee and food processing projects.

“Maraming binigay na training sa amin sa loob ng anim na buwan, pero mas pinili ko ang furniture making dahil marami akong tanim na mga puno. Gusto ko, ako mismo ang gumawa at magbenta.” (We were provided with various trainings within six months, but I chose furniture making because I have a lot of trees. I want to be the one to make and sell the furniture), said Cardo (not his real name), an RPWUD from Barangay Mangan.

Cardo now earns a steady income by supplying furniture goods to April Joy Home Decors and Furniture, one of the biggest furniture retailers in the Ilocos Region. He has also been able to employ his fellow RPWUDs as

furniture makers in his budding business.

Eliza, a former marijuana courier and among the beneficiaries of the seed capital fund provided by DSWD, now makes and sells banana chips. Eliza earns a daily average income of P200, which, she said, is a great help to augment the daily needs of her family.

But more than the livelihood support extended to her, Eliza is thankful for the rehabilitation program for the peace of mind it brought her and for making her realize the value of her family.

“Pagkatapos ng anim na buwan na paglalagi sa camp at noong maka-graduate kami, maayos na ang tulong ko. Nayayakap ko na ang mga anak ko. Naisip ko na kawawa sila kung nahuli ako. Hindi ko na sila mayayakap nang ganun.” (After six months of staying in the camp and after we graduated, I could now sleep well and hug my children. I thought I would never be able to hug them again had I been caught), Eliza shared.

According to Eliza, it is poverty that forced her to engage in the selling of marijuana.

“Wala kaming alam na pagkakakitaan na magbibigay sa aming pamilya ng malaking kita maliban sa pagtanim at pagde-deliver ng marijuana.” (We did not know of any other livelihood that could give our families high income except marijuana planting and delivery), she shared.

The 53-year-old recounted that she was apprehensive to surrender to authorities at first, but she thanked DSWD and the local government of Santol for helping her renew her life and obtain a decent source of livelihood with good income.

Like Eliza, Cardo was also hesitant at first, as he did not know what kind of rehabilitation program he would be undergoing.

“Pero sa huli ay naintindihan din namin na hindi lang payo kundi training para may mapagkakitaan, gaya ng furniture making na pinili ko.” (In the end, we understood that we would be given not just advice and guidance, but also livelihood trainings, just like the furniture-making skills training that I chose), he said.

Cardo said he is thankful to all those who supported him and his fellow Katipuneros in changing their lives for the better.

Together with the LGU of Santol, DSWD continues to monitor the progress of the livelihood projects implemented by the RPWUDs, provide additional technical assistance, and assist in the marketing of their products. The local government also recently opened a Negosyo Center in its Municipal Hall to promote the town’s products to visitors and to continuously provide means of livelihood to local product makers, including the PARE SLP Association.

DSWD 'Yakap Bayan' disaster response vehicle transforms Davao City's drug offenders to nation defenders

In support of the Duterte administration's efforts to combat the proliferation of illegal drugs, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) continues to collaborate with local government units (LGUs) to undertake reformatory measures to transform and rebuild the lives of recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) around the country with the help of the Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention.

Initiated and led by DSWD, Yakap Bayan is an inter-agency collaborative framework which weaves together all existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the rehabilitation, aftercare, reintegration, and provision of support services for RPWUDs. It aims to transform them from liabilities into assets — from surrenderers into productive citizens and community leaders.

The Framework was established pursuant to Republic Act (RA) No. 9165 also known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 and Executive Order No. 15 signed by President Rodrigo R. Duterte which mandated the creation of the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD) and Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force.

Yakap Bayan has now been translated into a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of LGU and nation approach.

One of the supportive partners of DSWD in the implementation of Yakap Bayan is Davao City which utilized the framework as a benchmark for its Community-Based Rehabilitation and After Care Program (CBRAP). CBRAP is spearheaded by the City Anti-Drug Abuse Council (CA-DAC) which operates in 182 barangays in the city.

"In 2017, our Barangay Resiliency and Recovery Support Group initiative was complemented with the Yakap Bayan Framework which was introduced by Assistant Secretary of DSWD Jose Antonio R. Hernandez. We prepared our clients for disaster responsiveness and mobilized them especially during disaster occurrences in their communities or in any crisis situation. They become disaster volunteers or responders. This undertaking is part of our treatment plan integrating the Yakap Bayan concept or what we call Motherland's Embrace which stresses kalinga (care). *Ang inyong gabay ay* (your guide is) Yakap Bayan because it takes all agencies to solve this problem," said Ronaldo A. Rivera, CADAC Technical Adviser for Community-Based Organizations.

Through the Yakap Bayan Framework, CADAC also pushes for the TARA NA or Tabangan Atong Reformists Aron Naay Asenso (Help Reformists Towards Progress). At present, 4,154 RPWUDs are enrolled in TARA NA.

"Through the urging of DSWD, we were able to mobilize the 5% barangay disaster fund in support to our clients who have been hired as disaster volunteers or responders in their barangays. Equipped with motorbikes, they assist in emergency situations like disasters or even escorting pregnant women to birthing facilities. When you change the worth of the person, he sees himself in a better perspective and he becomes a leader," Rivera continued.

CADAC also works with the Department of Health (DOH) in providing the appropriate treatment for clients, depending on the severity of their cases. DOH handles mild cases while the more severe ones are referred for residential care. CADAC on the other hand, offers physiological, social, psychosocial as well as spiritual interventions.

Other components of CADAC's CBRAP are orientation, recovery checklist and treatment evaluation, weekly drug screening, early recovery skills, relapse prevention skills, information dissemination, therapeutic recreational activities, family education, client status review, and case transfer conference.

Highlighting the relapse prevention program, Rivera said that the CADAC is determined to improve the recovery skills of their clients by modifying their lifestyle and prioritizing healthy living.

"We are the CADAC self-help support group. We were also drug users in the past and we call ourselves recovery coaches. What we are doing is love. What we constantly advocate is the health, education, and training of our clients. We aim for their smooth reintegration and independent functioning with their families and communities," he explained.

To further show convergence as exemplified by Yakap Bayan, CADAC is presently exploring

a project with Ateneo De Davao University on biotechnology fertilizer which will benefit 23 drug surrenderers. In addition, 40 drug surrenderers will be trained in sewing and shirt production through One Thread Project (OTP). OTP is a joint undertaking of CADAC and the University of the Immaculate Conception Community Development Services, One Thread Garments Enterprise, and the Therapeutic Community Support Group for Drug Surrenderers.

CADAC also conducts information dissemination campaign against illegal drugs in the city.

In June 2018, CADAC rolled out its Drug Education Module for CBRAP, both in formal and alternative learning systems, in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd), DOH, and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

Likewise, CADAC, in partnership with the graduate school of San Pedro College, will soon launch its training on Early Recovery Skills and Relapse Prevention.

With the successful implementation of the Yakap Bayan in Davao City, DSWD continues to engage other localities to collaborate and empower citizens who were once affected by drugs by allowing them to become volunteers and leaders in their communities.

“We are the CADAC self-help support group. We were also drug users in the past and we call ourselves recovery coaches. What we are doing is love. What we constantly advocate is the health, education, and training of our clients.”

Recovering person who used drugs finds a new beginning at Ifugao Reflection Camp



In the morning of August 2016, a man almost begged a group of policeman from Ifugao Provincial Mobile Force Company to shoot him dead. The man was June, a local government employee, and he wanted to die knowing his killers than be found lifeless, wrapped in packaging tape, and dumped in a dark alley or cliff. He could have died from the encounter but thankfully, he did not.

June was once deemed as a responsible husband and father to his two daughters and son. He headed a municipal office, while his wife, also a public servant, is an administrative officer at the provincial government. For his colleagues, he is a trusted and reliable co-worker, as well as an active member of the Knights of Columbus.

However, behind the picture of a successful man and a proud father, June carried with him the secret of his substance abuse. He claimed, though, that he could very well control his vices and a little more indulgence with stronger recreational substance would not be a big concern. After all, he believed that he gave the

best life for his family and he deserved a little reward for doing a good job and to help him cope with his daily activities.

As time passed by, his indulgence with his vices became a burden to him. He accumulated loans as high as P400,000 which prompted him to sell his car, motorcycles, other personal properties, and even his family's domesticated animals, without the knowledge of his wife. He used the money to finance his vices which included heavy alcohol intake, gambling, extra-marital affairs, and illegal drugs — all the things he felt entitled to because he believed that he was a good provider for his family.

"Six months before July 1, 2016, I tried to sell shabu to back up what I spent when I bought for my personal use and to share with my barkada," June narrated. At the peak of his illegal drugs intake, June maintained a dosage of the substance two times a day.

Turn of events

At the onset of the government's campaign against

illegal drugs, June's life turned upside down. His family discovered his secret and they wanted him to leave. His children also pressured their mother to file for legal separation because of what he did. At work, his frequent absences in the office triggered administrative sanctions against him. But the situation which rattled him the most was his discovery that he was labelled a high value target by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), and was also in the police drug watch list. At that moment, he felt he had no future left but death.

June's encounter with the police officers made him paranoid. He always felt being watched wherever he went and assumed that there were armed men out to shower him with bullets.

Finding a way out

In September 2016, June felt a moment of relief. Notices were posted in government offices in Ifugao encouraging drug personalities who wish to undergo rehabilitation to undergo intake interviews at a facility called the Ifugao Reflection Camp (IRC). It stated, "The camp would be opening on September 19, 2016. Bring your beddings."

The IRC is a facility that enables drug surrenderers to engage in a community-based rehabilitation program. It also provides aftercare services that would help them stay sober, productive, and eventually be fully integrated with their families and communities. The facility inspired the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Yakap Bayan Program, which provides a holistic intervention to assist RPWUDs in their recovery journey and to facilitate their social reintegration.

When June first arrived at IRC, he felt hesitant and fearful. He questioned his presence in the group of notorious pushers and users from the top ten of the drug watch list but, at the same time, he accepted that he had nobody to blame but himself for being placed in that position. He was among the first batch of campers who was accepted to undergo rehabilitation at IRC.

June admitted that it took three rounds at camp before he and his co-campers became at ease with their lives at IRC. At the camp, they received lectures, workshops, and trainings from various government agencies and non-government organizations to improve their holistic well-being.

To boost the overall health and wellness of the campers, personnel from the 54th Infantry Battalion (54IB) and 5th Infantry Division (5ID) of the Philippine Army (PA) taught them early morning calisthenics.

The campers also received medical check-ups from doctors and nurses from the Ifugao Health Office. The medical team also explained to the campers the

possible illnesses that they may get from illegal drugs.

In addition, policemen from the Provincial Mobile Force Company introduced them to cognitive behavioral therapy and how to change their mindset in coping with stress and life's problems. Personnel from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), likewise, inculcated in them the importance of abiding by rules of conduct, and to seek God's help in the face of adversity.

Moreover, there were pastors from various religious sects who gave spiritual guidance, and enlightened them on the importance of prayer and forgiveness. All of these were placed in context by personnel from the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) of Ifugao as part of their promotion to sustain family relationships and to become responsible members of the community.

June shared that among his memorable experiences at the camp was when his wife and children visited him during the series of Family Behavioral Sessions. He could not hold back his tears every time he begged for forgiveness from his family. He also said that their visits strengthened his desire to live so he can make up for all the lies, deceptions, and betrayals he had given them.

At the end of his six-month treatment phase at IRC, June commenced his 18-month aftercare with a public apology and confession during one of the Monday flag-raising ceremonies at the municipal hall. His testimony included a confession of his illegal drug use and vices. He also begged for the forgiveness of his co-public servants, and wholeheartedly accepted any administrative or criminal offense that would be filed against him.

Since Ifugao is a place that understands the value of second chances, June's immediate family and his superiors presented him with a list of stringent conditions that he must fulfill without excuse or attempt at evasion in order to free him from any administrative charges.

With the help of the people who continuously support him, June is confident that he can change for the better.

"I was good once at being a husband, father, and office supervisor. I shall truly strive to become that good, if not better again. Had I been in any other province rather than Ifugao, I would have been dead. I feel like somebody who met a terrible accident, but was given a second life. Truly, I am now living my second life and I dare not waste it. I'm past my terrible late mid-life crisis. Without President Duterte's war on drugs, I would have wasted away or grew worse by harming my own family. I owe so much to the social workers, soldiers, policemen, nurses, and psychologists at the Ifugao Reflection Camp for guiding me back to the path of reality and responsibility. Life is good. Haggiyo, Ifugao!," June ended

Peejay's journey: Road to recovery and family healing

When Peejay, a mother from the province of Ifugao, succumbed to illegal drug addiction, she did not realize what she traded it for—the trust of her children.

Peejay could still remember how devastated she was when her daughter visited her while she was detained at the Ifugao District Jail. She was disheartened as she saw her daughter approach her jail cell and broke into emotions. “Ma, akala ko ikaw ang best mom in the world,” her daughter, who was also pregnant during that time, said. “...pero gumagamit ka pala ng droga,” she continued.

Peejay was left speechless and powerless, as she watched her daughter rushed out of the facility, sobbing. During that moment, one thing was clear to her — she failed at being a mother.

Falling to addiction

Peejay grew up in poverty. As such, she promised herself that she would do everything she could to not let her future children undergo the hardships she experienced growing up.

While she was unable to attend college, Peejay was lucky to be employed by an affluent family that owned several businesses in three provinces in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). She persevered and performed her job well. As a result, she earned the trust of her employer and was entrusted to run one of their establishments. It was during that time when she met her husband, a co-worker who also dreamed of building a family and

“As she waits for her release, she continues to reinvent herself in preparation for the time when she would finally be reintegrated back to her family and regain her children's love and respect—a day when she would be able to mend the relationships broken by drug addiction.”

providing his future children with a better life. They later got married and continued working for the same employer.

Peejay first got exposed to illegal drugs when she saw her employers took illegal substances for recreation. In 2014, while attending a wake in their neighborhood, her friends urged her to try to take shabu or methamphetamine hydrochloride so she could stay awake all night—the start of her fall to drug addiction. Since then, she would join her friends during their drug sessions.

It was not too long when Peejay's husband learned of her secret. After a year, he confronted her after hearing rumors from their neighborhood. She denied using drugs at first, but later admitted it and even persuaded her husband to try taking the illegal substances as a relaxant after a day of work. Soon, it was not only Peejay who had been taking illegal drugs, but also her husband.

After learning what the couple has been up to, policemen raided Peejay and her husband's

home and found drug paraphernalia. Peejay was at work while her children were at school when the raid was conducted by authorities, so she was still able to hide what happened to their children. Criminal charges were then filed by the police against her.

Starting again

After what happened, both Peejay and her husband decided to turn over a new leaf by enrolling for rehabilitation at the Ifugao Reflection Camp (IRC), a facility located in Kiangang, Ifugao that enables recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) to engage in community-based rehabilitation program.

Peejay was already on the road towards renewing her life at IRC when policemen came to arrest her during her second week at the camp by virtue of a warrant of arrest for possession of drug paraphernalia. She made bail, but was later found guilty and was convicted. She was then brought to the Ifugao District Jail to serve her sentence. This led to her children finally discovering the secret that she and her husband had been working hard to conceal.

Peejay knew that she hurt her children, so she did her best to show them that she had been working hard to change herself and that she was determined to be with them again. She applied for a plea bargain deal and became the first RPWUD in Ifugao to avail of such. Soon, she was sentenced to undergo ten months of in-house (detained) rehabilitation back at the IRC.

The road towards recovery, however, is not easy. Peejay got distracted to fulfill her best-laid plans to regain her dignity and renew her life. Various negative thoughts entered her mind, making her behave inappropriately during her first four months of detention. But upon coming to understand how IRC sought to assist an RPWUD like her from being stigmatized to becoming trusted members of the community, Peejay finally got her act together.

At IRC, RPWUDs like Peejay are provided with aftercare services that would help them stay sober and be productive until they are fully reintegrated back with their families

and communities. IRC inspired the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention, an inter-agency collaborative framework which features the aftercare, reintegration, and transformation of RDPs. Through the Yakap Bayan, former drug dependents are transformed into community volunteers, and eventually advocates and community leaders who contribute to nation-building. The Framework has now been translated into a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach.

From a belligerent inmate, Peejay became involved in various activities at the camp. She willed herself to learn the principles and dynamics of drug abuse rehabilitation and eventually became adept with these. Soon, Peejay became a peer counsellor to her fellow clients at IRC. Her experiences and understanding of a drug user's mental processes helped enrich the knowledge of the psychologists, social workers, policemen, and other personnel tasked with behavioral change activities at the camp. With her help, procedures were revised and new ones were created to respond to the needs of her fellow RPWUDs.

Regaining love and respect

In everything that she went through, what hurt Peejay the most was the fact that she failed her children by falling to drug abuse. Being separated from them, she felt miserable not being able to fulfil her responsibilities and missing important milestones in their lives. This used to cause her to undergo fits of depression, but her new-found role as a counsellor to her fellow RPWUDs has helped her keep herself from being overcome by this condition.

Peejay's ten-month sentence already ended, but she is still waiting for the court order. As she waits for her release, she continues to reinvent herself in preparation for the time when she would finally be reintegrated back to her family and regain her children's love and respect—a day when she would be able to mend the relationships broken by drug addiction.

Drug surrenderers in Abra start anew through DSWD's livelihood program



Emerging from a dark period in their lives, drug surrenderers in the province of Abra get an opportunity to start anew through the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

DSWD provided a total of P75,000 worth of seed capital fund (SCF) to five drug surrenderers from Barangay Cabaruan, Danglas, Abra to enable them to start their own entrepreneurial projects, after they have completed their community-based rehabilitation and counseling service.

SCF is a one-time capability-building grant that serves as working fund for basic starter kits, raw materials, start-up expenses for securing permits to operate, as well as large and long-live tangible assets needed in starting or expanding a micro-enterprise. Each member may avail of a maximum seed capital fund worth P15,000.

To qualify for the SCF assistance, they organized themselves into a group named Cabaruan Hog

Raising Sustainable Livelihood Program Association (CHRSLPA), which was subsequently accredited by DSWD.

The association was provided with starter kits composed of eight piglets (60 days old), eight sacks of starter feeds, 16 sacks of grower feeds, eight sacks of finisher feeds, two shovels, two pails, and two plastic drums for their hog raising business. These were turned over to the association in February 2019 in the presence of the Municipal and Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (MADAC/BADAC) of Danglas, Abra.

Members of the group agreed to engage in hog raising since they are already familiar with the business, and there is a demand in their area.

"Kayat me nga agpasalit iti SLP ken iti LGU ta inikan dakami iti tyansa nga agbaliw. Ikari mi nga agbalaliw kamin ket padakkelen mi daytoy a proyekto nga naited kadakami para metlaeng ti pagsayaatan mi ken iti pamilya mi" (We want to thank SLP and the [Danglas]

LGU for giving us an opportunity to change. We commit to continue this transformation and make this livelihood prosper to economically uplift us and our families), the association president said.

"We hope that this assistance will assist our drug surrenderers to achieve a new life. We also hope that they will be able to sustain this livelihood. Our office, in partnership with the local government unit, will continue to support them in this endeavor," former DSWD Cordillera Administrative Region Director Janet P. Armas said.

Though the assistance is free from interest, the members are required to repay the amount provided to them based on their agreement within the association. This will ensure that the association will have revolving funds to operate the business.

As the lead agency in the formulation of aftercare and reintegration programs, DSWD, with other national

government agencies, is tasked to provide a wide range of aftercare services to reinforce the transformation and rehabilitation of drug surrenderers. This is done through the Yakap Bayan Framework which provides interventions to drug surrenderers such as skills training, psychosocial, livelihood, and other community-based activities so can they be transformed into productive citizens who will aid in nation-building.

The Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs or RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach. The program entails the provision of aftercare and support services to RPWUDs and engages their families and communities in relationship restoration sessions, community reconciliation sessions, and in reintegration planning. With the institutionalized aftercare services at the LGUs, RPWUDs will be able to maintain autonomous functioning and a lifestyle change.



Starter feeds and finisher feeds are part of the starter kit distributed to the Cabaruan Hog Raising Sustainable Livelihood Program Association for their livelihood project. (DSWD-CAR photo)

Recovering persons who used drugs get second chance in life, become budding entrepreneurs

There could never be a more appropriate name for the livelihood group of some 84 recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs) from La Paz District, Iloilo City than “New Life Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Association” which very well reflects their commitment to move on from their dark past and begin a new chapter in their lives.

These 84 RPWUDs, who completed the Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), are now new entrepreneurs in their own right.

DSWD, through Yakap Bayan Framework, has worked closely with various line agencies and local government units (LGUs) to weave together existing government programs, projects, resources, and activities in order to create a holistic and sustainable approach for the rehabilitation, aftercare, reintegration, and provision of support systems for RPWUDs, their families, and their communities. The Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, which provides a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach.

Part of the Yakap Bayan interventions is the provision of livelihood assistance to RPWUDs and their families through the DSWD Sustainable Livelihood Program.

For their project, members of the New Life SLP Association chose to operate a laundry business which they set up at Barangay San Pedro, Lapaz District, Iloilo City.

The business was financed through SLP’s seed capital fund amounting to P840,000 or P10,000 per member.

Quick Labada, as the members call it, offers laundry services at cheaper rates to residents within their community and neighboring areas.

“With the busy lifestyle of people nowadays, this line of business is a demand for many. We hope that we could access funding to buy a tricycle so we could also deliver finished laundry to households and thus gain more profit,” Roberto Dequina, the association president, said.

Roberto and the rest of the association shared that managing the laundry business on their own is a life-changing experience.

“This kind of life is way better than the life which we used to have. It is more peaceful. We encourage other drug dependents to stop using illegal drugs and to undergo rehabilitation. Through this, we get to have another chance in life and in a way, reestablish our connection with our families, especially our children,” he said.

Aside from the livelihood assistance given by DSWD, members also received additional

funding of P10,000 each from the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) of Iloilo City. Medical assistance totalling to P107,000 was, likewise, provided to them by the CSWDO for their complete rehabilitation and recovery.

DSWD also tapped the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) to hold a lecture-discussion for the members. The chosen topic for the activity was positive disciplining which proved to be useful for members who have children. This further enhanced their parenting skills to provide guidance and direction to their children so that they would tread the right path

when they grow up.

Moreover, DSWD partnered with the CSWDO, headed by the focal person on Aftercare Services, and with the practicum students of Bachelor of Science in Social Work from the Central Philippines University for the conduct of a team building activity for the members to enhance their camaraderie.

With the leadership of Roberto, cooperation of the other members, and the downpour of help from various sectors, the association continues to be inspired to make their new endeavor successful, proving once again, that there is always a second chance in life.



Santino's redemption: How a 12-year-old boy escaped from the clutches of illegal drugs

“
*He has all the reasons to
start dreaming again.*
”

There is no valid excuse for pushing illegal drugs.

But what if the one involved is a child, who was abandoned by his mother, raised by a grandmother, and then exploited by unscrupulous relatives to peddle illegal drugs?

These thoughts bothered the undercover police operatives as they caught an emaciated, unkempt boy who tried selling them dried marijuana leaves inside two matchboxes, probably thinking he had hit a jackpot with a bunch of local tourists in the picturesque town of Banaue.

As they arrived at the Lagawe Provincial Office or Camp Joaquin Dunuan, the police realized that they had possibly apprehended Ifugao's youngest pusher to date in the person of a 12-year-old-boy.

A pusher or a victim?

The boy, called Santino, not his real name, was among the first names that surfaced at the onset of the war on drugs which began in June 2016.

An alleged pusher to local tourists, Santino was placed under surveillance. Long hours of close observation showed the boy's tactic in plying his trade within the trails of the famous rice terraces during weekends.

The police operatives noted that no adult appeared

to be directing his actions, thus, a carefully planned buy-bust was initiated to confirm his involvement in the illegal drugs trade.

A promise of money and fear of punishment

Santino was sullen and hesitant to answer questions while at Camp Dunuan. A medical check-up revealed signs of physical abuse but he refused to say who inflicted them.

When a social worker from Banaue arrived, he became more withdrawn but adamantly insisted that his grandmother had nothing to do with his business nor the scars on his body. He revealed the location of his marijuana stash, which operatives later found to be concealed among Malunggay leaves.

Being a minor, the court handed Santino to the custody of the Provincial Social Welfare & Development Office (PSWDO), and ordered him to undergo rehabilitation at the Ifugao Reflection Camp (IRC), along with seven other teens from nearby municipalities who were also arrested for drug use.

IRC is a facility that enables drug surrenderers to engage in a community-based rehabilitation program. It also provides aftercare services that would help them stay sober, productive, and eventually be fully reintegrated with their families and communities.

IRC inspired the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Yakap Bayan Framework of Intervention, an inter-agency collaborative framework which features the aftercare, reintegration, and transformation of recovering persons who used drugs (RPWUDs). Through the Yakap Bayan, RPWUDs are transformed into community volunteers, and eventually advocates and community leaders who contribute to nation building. The Yakap Bayan

Framework has now been translated into the Yakap Bayan Program, a holistic model of intervention for LGUs in assisting RPWUDs and their families through a whole-of-LGU and nation approach. It entails the provision of aftercare and support services such as counselling sessions, health and fitness therapy, spiritual interventions, skills training, and capacity-building to RPWUDs.

In his first three months at the IRC, he remained unsociable, but nonetheless, participated in the activities. Santino began opening up when he was challenged by a police officer to write down his ambitions but had nothing good to write. He further stated that he was confused about what he learned at IRC on why he was called a pusher. Later on, Santino began crying as he could not write down his ambitions; all he thought was being sentenced with life imprisonment or punishment from his "uncle".

Clueless about being a pusher

Santino disclosed that an "uncle" had taught him that selling marijuana is a good source of income since tourists demand for it. He was given P200 for every sale, which he used to buy things he needed at school.

Santino shared that he gets paid for every sale, but he also gets beaten up or hanged upside down if he was unable to sell.

Reshaping Santino's life away from drugs

The last three months of Santino's stay at IRC was marked by the collaborative effort of the staff to help him shape a new path in life.

The Department of Education (DepEd) was called in to help him continue his studies through the Alternative Learning System (ALS), while the Ifugao Provincial Health Office provided a health regimen to address his malnutrition and medical condition.

Addressing his mental and emotional state became a joint effort of the PSWDO and the Ifugao Provincial Police Office. Social workers helped him develop a healthy perception of family and community while the police, on the other hand, educated him on how to live by rules and the law.

Likewise, personnel of the Bureau of Jail Management & Penology (BJMP), soldiers from the 54th Infantry Battalion (54IB) and 5th Infantry Division (5ID) of the Philippine Army (PA), and pastors from various denominations helped enrich his spiritual life, telling him how God is present in whatever situation he is facing.

The aftercare treatment

Santino finished his six-month treatment phase and moved to the 18-month aftercare, wherein he applied his learnings from IRC in his community in Banaue. There, he had to cope with the stigma of having been arrested as a pusher, resist the tempting offers from his former tourist clients, and endure an impoverished life with a grandmother who can only give minimal financial and parental support.

To protect him from the threats posed by adults who had exploited him, local police and barangay watchmen guarded his routes within the community, while a local businessman provided him weekend employment by manning a novelty store.

Along with other drug personalities undergoing aftercare, Santino joined the Disaster Response Training provided by the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO). They learned to do first aid, basic life support, rappelling, water search, and rescue (WASR). He also availed of the Tile Setting Training of the Technological Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), but did not complete it because of conflicting schedules at school.

Santino's ambition: A new beginning

According to Santino, the most significant change in his life resulting from his rehabilitation at IRC was his ability to forgive those who abandoned, misled, and exploited him. He has also accepted having made wrong decisions in the past, and is willing to accept the consequences of his mistakes.

With the help of the Municipal Social Welfare & Development Office of Banaue, he now lives with his mother, step-father, and step-siblings. He uses his earnings from gardening and other jobs to help in the financial needs of their family.

In 2018, the Municipal Anti-Drug Abuse Council of Banaue bannered Santino's case as one of their success stories when he was elected as the Grade 6 class president because of a demonstrated higher level of maturity and leadership, and not because he was the eldest pupil.

He was able to graduate with honors from elementary.

Finally, he has mustered enough confidence to write about his ambition in life and that is to finish his studies and to become a policeman someday.

From confusion, resentment, and depression, Santino has become a focused and committed teenager, enthusiastic and confident at meeting life's challenges. For now, he has all the reasons to start dreaming again.

Young businessman looks beyond the stigma, sets up livelihood project for recovering persons who used drugs



How can the business sector help in government programs for Recovering Persons Who Used Drugs (RPWUDs)?

RBryan J. Mendiola IV, proprietor of One Thread Garments Enterprise and RBryan Marketing based in Davao City, has set an example.

“When I learned of the interventions offered by the City Anti-Drug Abuse Council (CADAC) to drug surrenderers, I went to CADAC and informed the in-charge I was interested to put up a livelihood project for the drug

surrenderers,” said RBryan.

CADAC is a specially created office to take the lead in the prevention and control of drug abuse in the city and suburbs, established at the local government level through Memorandum Circular No. 98-227 of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). It also serves as a repository of statistical data, information, and reports on drug users, abusers, and pushers coming from other law enforcement units, the barangays, other local government units (LGUs), and non-government organizations (NGOs).

“I wanted to train them and hire them so it won’t be hard for them to look for a job considering their background because people tend to ostracize them. This garment industry has vast potential for persons like them in terms of income, very lucrative on their part and also for them to have equal footing with others in society,” he expounded.

Davao City CADAC was able to find RBryan a partner to implement his noble plans for RPWUDs, through Dr. Corazon M. Umblero, Director of Community Development Services, University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC). UIC is also helping RPWUDs in their journey towards healing through its Kaduyog Sagop Kinabuhì Program.

RBryan presented his intention to help the clients, through his garments business, to Dr. Umblero. They agreed to work together, and UIC even offered the free use of its Mother Ignacia Development Center located in the city as the work area for the project. They called their partnership “One Thread Project.”

Aside from providing a source of income for RPWUDs, the proceeds of the project will also fund initiatives to help them further improve their work and survival skills, and pay for their board and lodging, and other expenses.

To date, 16 RPWUDs have been trained through the One Thread Project.

One of them is Riga, a mother of three, who became a beneficiary after her release from prison. The skills she learned in sewing and shirt-making has opened livelihood opportunities for her.

“To our recovering persons who used drugs, let us continue the steps towards change. For private groups, I also encourage them to reach out and lend their hand to these people so that we can help our country and reduce crime. Let’s be productive and share our resources. No more blaming the government and others. Let us help these people, hire them, give them a chance to attain genuine change,” RBryan stated.

Dr. Umblero explained that the One Thread Project is a means to enhance the social fabric,

“malasakit,” as represented by various public and private service providers of medical, psychosocial, socio-economic, and spiritual interventions.

“The recovery capital needs of persons in recovery is like the spindle that produces the necessary twists and loops us into a roll of thread,” she said.

Meanwhile, for Dahlia S. Padillo, Social Welfare Officer IV and focal person for program on drugs of DSWD Field Office XI, “One Thread Project is a demonstration of the Yakap Bayan Program, of pooling our resources, of embracing and empowering our RPWUDs, and encouraging them to lead productive, meaningful lives.”

The Yakap Bayan program is a holistic intervention to assist RPWUDs in their recovery journey and to facilitate their social reintegration. It entails the provision of support services such as counselling sessions, health and fitness therapy, spiritual interventions, skills training, and capacity-building to RPWUDs. To ensure successful reintegration of RPWUDs in their communities, families and communities are engaged in relationship restoration sessions, community reconciliation sessions, and in the reintegration planning with the RPWUDs. The Program also weaves together the readily available resources of the LGUs and national government agencies as technical assistance and resource augmentation providers, the academe, CSOs, and faith-based groups in order to provide an enabling recovery environment for RPWUDs and their families.

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