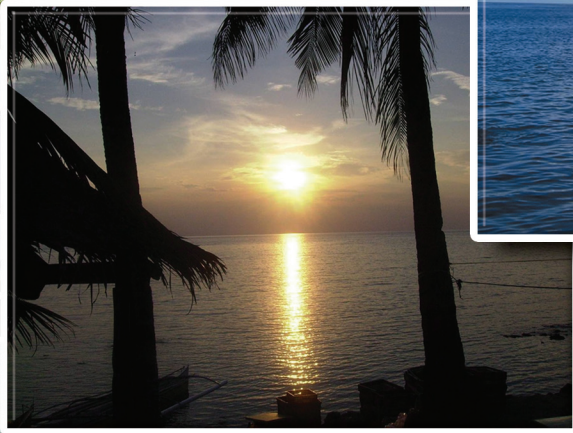


Limasawa



Cradle of Good Nutrition in the Philippines





National Nutrition Awarding ceremony, Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Oct. 25, 2011.



Region 8 health and nutrition leaders share pride with Limasawa's NHA honor

Limasawa

Cradle of Good Nutrition

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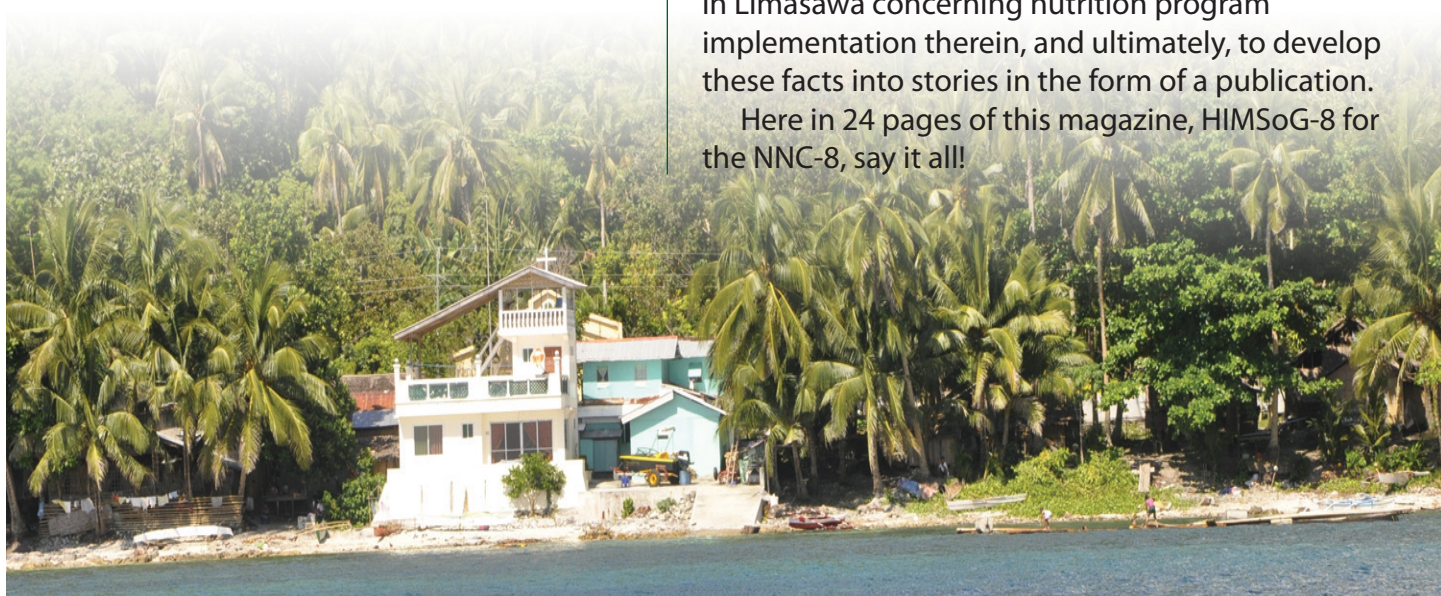
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LIMASAWA, an island-municipality in Southern Leyte, is a small yet flourishing town as the site of the First Christian Mass in the country and in Asia. The First Cross and the First Mass Shrines, are some of the frequently visited spots that give tourists a rare experience of retracing the historic footsteps of the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 who paved the way for the beginning of Christianity in the country.

Limasawa is special because it is the first ever recipient of the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in Eastern Visayas region. To be one is very remarkable. Aside from that, it is an island with unique characteristics, including the fact that it is the site of the first mass in the Philippines and it is inhabited by very charming people.

Last March 2012, Harmonized Initiatives of Media for the Spread of Good Nutrition in Region 8 (HIMSoG-8), the regional media group organized by the National Nutrition Council, conducted a media caravan to Limasawa to document best practices of the municipality on nutrition, the factors why and how they won the Nutrition Honor Award, the different perspectives of the nutrition stakeholders in Limasawa concerning nutrition program implementation therein, and ultimately, to develop these facts into stories in the form of a publication.

Here in 24 pages of this magazine, HIMSoG-8 for the NNC-8, say it all!





Nutrition top agenda in Limasawa



Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta delivering his response speech to the NHA

MANILA – “I cannot bear to see even only one malnourished child. To me it is one of the saddest things in the world – hungry children, thin, sickly, cannot attend school, and dying because of malnutrition. For me I cannot stand to ignore malnutrition to happen, especially when this can be avoided and given solution.”

Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta in taglish poignant response speech stated to the island of Limasawa’s being conferred the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA), highest award in nutrition, during the National Nutrition Awarding ceremony held at the Philippine

International Convention Center (PICC) on Oct. 25, 2011.

Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Enrique T. Ona personally awarded to Mayor Melchor Petracorta the NHA trophy and incentive cash prize of P500,000. Top officials present to witness the occasion were Assistant Secretary Maria-Bernardita T. Flores, National Nutrition Council (NNC) Executive Director IV, DOH-8 Regional Director, Edgardo M. Gonzaga and NNC-8 Regional Director Carina Z. Santiago.

Mayor Petracorta also expressed gratitude to the people who made possible for his town to grab the highest honor among them Asst. Sec. Bernardita Flores, who with the members of the national and regional



nutrition evaluation teams braved the waves during an inclement weather to cross to the historic island for the final evaluation, and Director Carina Santiago, who has always been there to mentor and encourage the islanders to make good their nutrition program.

“Nutrition has always been my centerpiece program. And all this talk about good governance is nothing without nutrition in its agenda. Kaya po siguro sa amin, ang mahirap hindi na nagiging masyadong mahirap,” he averred.

Petracorta said, “Para sa akin po, di ko matitiis na hayaang mangyari ang malnutrisyon lalung-lalo kung maaari naman itong iwasan o bigyan ng solusyon.” Thereby he made a pledge not

to allow malnutrition to exist in his beloved town. And this passion has rubbed on to his people—in the local government unit and in the villages. “Nahawa na rin sila sa akin. And no wonder, we are here right now.”

Petracorta revealed from the time he first ran for mayor he only dreamt of a progressive, happy and peaceful Limasawa. But the journey was not easy as it was fraught with many challenges: Limasawa being a 6th class municipality with a very small IRA, an isolated island very far from

the mainland, food insecurity due to limited land area for agriculture, and distant from basic health services, being an island.

But strong determination and unity among the municipal leaders and the town’s

people were the keys to their triumph—all of them believing that nothing can stand on their way. “The good thing about it is nobody is against it—all of us believed and united that investing in nutrition will reap us many returns.” (JCG)



Food preparation is a participative family affair

Municipal Nutrition Committee

Limasawa, Southern Leyte

Living separately on the southwestern part of the Southern Leyte Province, the island municipality of Limasawa quietly but unremittingly

shining a throng of guardians of good nutrition. Its difficult geographical location, often challenged by rough waters, food security and basic health service delivery, hasn't disheartened the people from upholding a

realm of well-nourished citizenry.

Through the leadership of its pro-active Mayor Melchor Petracorta and his unwavering alliance, the Municipal Nutrition Committee or MNC paves its way to the sustainability of the

nutrition program in the island with the goal of totally eliminating the multifactorial causes of malnourishment in the locality. The Mayor inculcated among his co-leaders and co-implementers the importance of self-reliance in order to create well-built programs for the

empowerment of every individual. He gave out challenges and put his full trust on each of the stakeholders for them to develop their own management skills and

CROWN Awardee in 2007, the people realized that their efforts have been recognized. This made them work for more, sustained their household gardens, school

gardens and barangay gardens to address the scarcity of food supply. They also chose the best gardens in all categories as models to other households so that



Mayor Petracorta presides an outdoor meeting with the Municipal Nutrition Committee

tactics for the realization of the municipality's agenda. "Hinayaan ko silang magtrabaho, habang ako'y nakamasid at nakaalalay lamang sa kanila", the friendly mayor would say.

Having been chosen as a

the spirits of creativeness, sportsmanship and sharing be manifested in all of them and boosting the ego of those who are well-performing.

CROWN is an acronym for Consistent Regional Outstanding



Mayor Petracorta gives constituents of Limasawa active leadership

Winner in Nutrition.

The barangay and municipal officials who look at the health of the people with high regard pursued some initiative to convince the Department of Health for the extension of the services their "Doctor to the Barrio (DTTB)" Dr. Martin R. Parreno (MNAO) in the area. They made great efforts in attending the graduation ceremony of the DTTB to cry out their utmost need of a physician in their locality. As their wish was granted, they showed their appreciation by

pledging their full support to whatever program the Rural Health Center may undertake.

The municipality, having a minimal Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and a challenged health budget, increased its linkages with external supports. The Philippine

Charity Sweepstakes, An Waray Party List, Kinderhilfe Philippinen (a German NGO), Rotary Clubs of Talisay-Cebu and Maasin



Meetings of nutrition stakeholders are always interesting with participants exchanging thoughts and pleasantries.

annually allocate funds for the feeding program, vitamin supplementation and a year-

the awareness of the people towards health. They initiated the "GANDAHING BUNTIS" pageant to



Information, Education and Communication materials regarding good nutrition are posted at strategic places

give due recognition to the variant roles of the mother in home-building, their importance in society and boosting their spirits to develop their personalities. They were also given free laboratory services and gift packs during the nutrition month.

round supply of medicines to the indigent citizens.

The MNC did not stop from making creative ideas to increase

Each barangay has an empowered Women's Health Team. Each team, in turn, created a Buntis Baby Bank (bamboo coin bank),



"Gandahing Buntis" is a pageant conducted every Nutrition Month honoring women for being mothers and their special role in society.



Limasawa people always lend hearing ears and follow the guidance of authorities

a microfinancing scheme to assist the financial need of each pregnant woman during delivery. It is displayed in the RHU and properly locked and secured. All of the pregnant women put in coins or any amount during their prenatal visits. Visitors and other patients with extra allowances also drop in money during consultation.

To consistently monitor the health of the pregnant and lactating mothers, the RHU, through its limited fund, mass-produces locally initiated prenatal forms and a pregnancy monitoring chart. It likewise made a partnership with Mariestope clinic, conducting family planning lecture and subsidized family planning care such as bilateral tubal ligation, pap's smear, IUD insertion and free vasectomy. The health office is Philhealth accredited, thus the maternal care package, newborn care, TB and out-patient benefit package

programs are optimally delivered by competent health workers.

To further spin up the people's awareness on good nutrition, each Barangay Nutrition Committee (BNC) did a Visayan Version of the Nutritional Guidelines for Filipinos and posted it in their respective nutrition posts. The MNC publishes NUTRILINES biannually, a 4-page nutrition newslines depicting all MNC activities and anything related to health.

The MNC also sponsored Extreme Sports to raise funds

and made a raffle draw annually to purchase Detecto weighing scales to be given to all barangays and schools. It also launched a program "Barya Mo, Kalusugan Ko", wherein all BNCs and the MNC adopted bamboo coin banks and placed it in public and private offices for people to see and insert coins for the benefit of the malnourished children in Limasawa. Every week the Barangay Health Workers will bring these with them and tour it around the barangay for anybody



Mayor Petracorta congratulate a winner of a raffle draw conducted every Christmas wherein the proceeds of the raffle of are utilized to procure Detecto weighing scales.

to give donations, thus increasing their knowledge on proper nutrition. Quarterly these coin banks are gathered during the MNC meeting and the collections equally shared between the BNC and MNC. Another source of income are the fines from illegal fishing which are donated to the groups. They don't only augment the MNC's fund but also regulate and discipline the foreign and local fishers involved.

The office of the municipal mayor maintains a vermiculture farm, producing organic fertilizer

and distributed to target families or sold at a lower price to other households for their gardens.

Low family income makes a major contribution in the persistence of malnutrition. Thus, the local

government in partnership with TESDA, conducted several livelihood trainings like



haircutting, massage and manicure/ pedicure with free kits to target households. Planting materials and fishing equipment

were annually supplied by the agriculture office with the help of NGOs. Food and medical assistance from the social welfare office are also continually done.

Limasawa, a small island, a pin-point on the map of the Philippines, slowly emerges as a haven of a well-rounded individual, and as a sentinel of good nutrition. Surely she will shine, she will mold and she will sculpture other state and locales.



A main source of income, island women sort out fish catch for their food and those for sale.

“Operation Tulong Alaga” Nurtures Limasawa Kids

By *Elvie Roman-Roa*

conceptualization of the program was a result of a thorough discussion after finding no other means to raise funds in order to eliminate malnourished

members had also to visit the concerned parents to put in more knowledge on how to rear their kids in a healthy way.

Following the implementation of the program, the number of

malnourished children in Limasawa went down. However, as the program culminated there were still few that remain a focus of the LGU but barely countable by fingers.

The efforts made by Mayor Petracorta confirmed that despite inadequacy of financial sources, the local government can still find other means without relying so much from external support. He said the program’s conceptualization never encountered hindrances as everybody was optimistic who did each part of attaining the target.



Mayor Petracorta explains the mechanics of “Operation Tulong Alaga”

The scarcity of funds never stopped Mayor Melchor Petracorta of Limasawa Island of Leyte from dreaming of providing good nutrition to all the children in his town. With the unconditional support of the townfolks, the “Operation Tulong Alaga” program was created in June, 2010 that proved successful when previous number of malnourish children gradually diminished.

The “Operation Tulong Alaga” is composed of 40 local government officials and employees headed by Mayor Petracorta who vowed to shell out finances from their own pockets in support to children below five years old. The



LGU officials agree to raise first the resources from within themselves to combat malnutrition of children in the island immediately

children in the town.

The members agreed to contribute Php500.00 each in six months that was used in purchasing foods for the kids. The Barangay Nutrition Scholars and Barangay Health Workers were tasked to routinely feed the identified children through a house to house procedure daily. The



League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP)—Southern Leyte Chapter and Cebu Employees and Customs Brokers Union regularly conduct supplemental feeding to children in the island.



Now a practice every Christmas Limasawa children receive gifts from NGOs out of Operation Christmas Child-Samaritans Purse, USA .



NGOs abroad like the Philippine Island-Inland Mission, Australia also downloaded birthing facilities donation.

Healthy pregnancy is everybody's business in Limasawa

By Ronald O. Reyes

Being pregnant triggers many personal and financial “inconveniences,” in one way or another. But not in this island-town of Limasawa in the province of Southern Leyte.

Here pregnant mothers, their husbands and the entire community join hands to ensure that health and financial cares of pregnant women and their families—from conception to delivery and to proper rearing of the child—will be taken cared of thru their best local health practices.

Alex Calonia, a father and village captain in Cabulihan, this town, says he is happy that his constituents now appreciate their health programs, like the “Buntis Baby Bank.”

“Here individual coin banks are provided for all pregnant women in the island, and being maintained in the Rural health Unit and Barangay Health Stations to help them save money in preparation for the birth of the child,” he says.

Also every prenatal visit,



and examinations to pregnant women.



Under “Pre-natal sa Biyernes-Pakan-on ang Buntis” the RHU provides pre-natal services and also food for the expectant mothers.

pregnant women drop coins or bills in their own “bank” (which is made of bamboo), while visitors may also drop coins.

“Before, we usually have problems on where to get money for our mothers when they come to us (village leaders) for help during the delivery of their

here,” he adds.

He says the system is like coming up with a “sinking fund” for the mothers.

“This is like forced, communal savings to them. Anyway they will be the one to benefit from this.”

His village usually has 2-5 pregnant mothers every year, and



The RHU doctor gives consultations...

at the time of the delivery, the mother or mothers usually get around P2,000 or more from their “bank”, which will also be checked or validated by the village

child. But when this project was implemented, the fathers and the mothers became excited on this.”

Each pregnant woman will also take turn in putting additional amount for expectant mothers to cover the medical bills.

Village captain Alex Calonia speaks about the nutrition program in Limasawa.

“This may sound ‘crude’ to outsiders, but it’s indeed working here in our community. We all try to save for each child to be born

treasurer.

“At least there will be a ready money during the delivery. This can help them, more if the pregnancy is complicated and they needed additional money so they could travel to a hospital in the mainland.”

Fishing is the main livelihood of this small town, and most of them don’t have health insurances.

The people here have to take a 40-minute “banca (with outrigger)” ride to the mainland, where its

provincial hospital is another 1-hour bus ride.

This 6th Class island municipality with its six villages has only one assigned doctor for its around 6,000 residents. Also it has only P20.86 million annual revenue allotment with about P200,000 allotted to health for its constituents.

Alex says, he himself is also saving and contributing for others.

He says that with meager internal revenue allotment (IRA) which is around P805,000 per annum, they usually have P20,000 for health programs.

This year however the amount is

Community Health Team which has also their corresponding functions, most likely in giving of needed assistance to pregnant women and lactating mothers since it is believed that good nutrition starts from the womb.”

Also, they organized a Barangay (village) Feeding Group, primarily to monitor the mother and child if they follow the law that children would be given purely mother’s milk from 0-6 months of age.

“Although we don’t allow our stores to sell commercial milk, yet if they will be found out using commercial milk, we will have them called at the barangay hall,

for lecture or reminder,” Calonia stresses.

Meanwhile Calonia says that even the fathers are encouraged in promoting health practices for their pregnant wives.

“We don’t leave the job of providing



Going to and coming from Limasawa on a pumpboat is always an exciting adventure.

mothers during their pregnancy, teaching them the correct position for breastfeeding, maintain the nutrition of their children, and monitor their own nutritional status as well.

And the fathers are not taking it as a joke, he adds.

“I am even enrolled in the class, so I can prepare myself and know my role again when we’ll have



Municipal health workers conduct regular “Micronutrient Supplementation” to mitigate micronutrients disorders.

even scrimped to around P15,000 due to budget cut implemented by the national government.

Population of his village is 794 with 178 households.

“We are relying now on our community initiatives in promoting the health and welfare of our pregnant mothers and their children.”

Calonia says they have operational Breastfeeding Support Group which gives ounces of milk to mothers who are in need of milk.

“This group also monitors the feeding practices of mothers. And they are complemented with the

nutrition in the family to our mothers alone. We now have

Fathers’ Class here. This is to orient and educate fathers on what to do when their wives are getting pregnant or having children already.”

During the class, which is held quarterly, fathers are taught on how to assist



our second child soon,” he says enthusiastically.

Calonia says that they seem like doing the “impossible” in educating the parents, yet it is already happening in their village now.

However on cases of teenage pregnancy, Calonia says that usually this happens to teenagers from their place who went to far-flung provinces or in Manila and who went back to the Island



Municipal health workers show a new mother the intricacies of breastfeeding and inculcate in her importance of it to her infant.

already pregnant.

“In this situation, we have no choice but to help these young mothers during their pregnancy period.”

Aside from this, the village regularly follows the local ordinance of the town on other health practices



Every Nutrition Month a “Healthy Babay Contest” is held among 6-11 months old infants to promote exclusive breastfeed feeding that is the main criteria of the contest.



Quarterly Consultative Meeting with parents of malnourished children monitors prevalence whether it is lowering or growing.

for pregnant mothers. They have “Prenatal sa Biyernes, Pakan-on ang Buntis” – wherein pregnant women are given supplemental feeding, lecture and advice on exclusive breastfeeding and healthy eating practices after prenatal every Friday.

Another is “Healthy Baby Contest” — a contest to promote exclusive breastfeeding among infants 0-6 months.

Parents are also encouraged to maintain their own vegetable

garden in the backyard and another for the children in school to supply the family with nutritious foods.

For Alex and other village captains and their constituents, every health project they have becomes worth taking, particularly when their town becomes the pride of the entire Eastern Visayas region via 2011 Nutrition Honor Award recognition due to their community-based efforts to curb malnutrition and infant and mother mortality rates for the past six years– this is also in consonance to UN- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Also their 14-plus health “Best Practices” have helped the town to achieve the highest literacy rate of 97% compared to the other 18 towns in the province.

Calonia says that they have achieved what their town deserved for.

“We are not the only place in this country where Christianity was first planted through Ferdinand Magellan on March 31, 1521, but also the first place in this region to win a national health award for our mothers and children,” Calonia says, with pride.

Limasawa fathers support proper breastfeeding practice

By Sarwell Q. Meniano

Mothers in this island town are not left alone in ensuring that children are well nourished with fathers equipped with knowledge on good nutrition and proper breastfeeding.

“Tatay Ko, Kaagapay sa Kalusugan Ko” campaign was launched three years ago by the local government, which regularly gathers all fathers in the island and orient them on their role to improve or maintain the nutritional status of children.

Jesrel Tiongco, a community health team member said that while men in other places usually make jokes on breastfeeding-related topics, fathers here are taking the support role seriously.

“We gather in barangay

health center every quarter and discuss how fathers would support lactating women. We ensure exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life. We also learn the proper position of breastfeeding so that we can help our wives,” said Tiongco, a father of a three-year-old child.

Tiongco is thankful for his knowledge on breastfeeding since this helped them save more expense for medication since their child has strong resistance against illnesses.



A father in Cabulian village shows love and compassion for family by sharing care for his child after work.

Remegilda Salomon, municipal nutrition action officer said that during a gathering with fathers, local nutrition workers give updates on good nutrition and responsible parenthood aside from breastfeeding promotion.

“As practiced in Limasawa, the mother and the father jointly monitor the nutritional status of their children,” Salomon said.

In 2010 almost all the men in the municipality together with all municipal and barangay officials had undergone the training on Infant and Young Child Feeding and the Pabasa sa Nutrisyon.

In most areas in the region, these advocacies are centered on health and nutrition workers and mothers.

In this town, stores don't sell infant formula since all mothers

(turn to page 18)



Ten fathers from every village in the island-town are given Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) training every year.

Vegetable gardening knocks down malnutrition

By Sarwell Q. Meniano

There are countless factors why this island municipality made it to the top of the list of areas in the country with excellent performance in curbing malnutrition but the practice of vegetable gardening is seen as a big stepping stone.

Obviously, residents young and old are not just vegetable eaters but vegetable planters as well with the six villages in this historic town dotted with home, school, and barangay gardens.

Local government employees had set the example of the importance of planting vegetables as each department maintained garden plots in a lot



close to the municipal hall.

"We have to ensure food security since we are an island municipality. Bringing farm products here is costly and we are not assured of quality. The best way is to go for local production of vegetables," said Mayor Melcho Petracorta.

Municipal senior agriculturist



A strong advocate of "Food Always In The Home" (FAITH), the MNC launched the "Gulay Bawat Bahay, Hahaba Ang Buhay" Program where in all household, schools, and barangays are encourage to maintain vegetable gardens.

Nelma Montemayor said they launched a program dubbed as "Halamanan ng Bayan Para sa Kalusugan ng Mamamayan," which is being regularly supervised by municipal and barangay officials.

"The program makes sure that every household have their own garden so that they don't have to buy vegetables in the market," Montemayor added.

Using organic way of farming, the barangay, school and households maintain vegetable garden that produce different varieties of vegetables. Excess consumption is being brought to a food terminal for additional income of farmers.

In Barangay Cabulihan, where only one is malnourished out of 78 preschoolers, all households are required to cultivate vegetables with malunggay as the basic plant.

"Poverty is not an excuse why we should stop combating

malnutrition. We started with six malnourished and now there's only one and we are closely monitoring the child's status and ensure that the family cultivate and eat vegetables," said Memon Bulactiar, barangay nutrition scholar (BNS) of Cabulihan village.

Cabulihan Chairman Alex Calunia said they have been adopting the Food Always in the Home Program, which allows residents to eat nutritious food without spending money through

(turn to page 18)



Excess vegetables from home gardens are generated to extra income

Media caravan to historic Limasawa



NNC-8 Regional Director Carina Z. Santiago and HIMSoG-8 President Francis Batula open the Agri-Trade Fair during the First Mass Anniversary comemoration.

LIMASAWA – Twenty-eight practicing media personalities coming from different parts of Eastern Visayas have caravanned to this island municipality of Southern Leyte, cite of the First Mass in the country, to gather first hand information on “what makes this island stand-out” from other places nationwide when it comes to nurturing a healthy constituency.

The media practitioners are all members of the Harmonized

Initiatives of Media for the Spread of Good Nutrition in Region 8 (HIMSoG-8), media group partner of the National Nutrition Council (NNC). Together with a team from NNC-8, headed by Regional Director Carina Z. Santiago, the group pushed for a two-day caravan here on March 30-31, 2012. The occasion coincided with First Mass 491st anniversary celebration.

Despite its geographical location that’s making it isolated from delivery of health and other basic services, Limasawa

is a recipient of the highest award in nutrition, the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA); and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) “Galing Pook Award”, for achievements in nutrition.

HIMSoG-8 aims to document the factors that enabled this 6th class island-municipality to earn the most prestigious and hardest-to-win nutrition award, and bring out the wonderful stories in a magazine and audio-visual presentation—to showcase Limasawa’s best

NNC-8 delegation and media group HIMSoG after meeting with provincial leaders in Maasin City prepare for jump-off to historic Limasawa Island.





On to Limasawa Island



Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta welcomes NNC-8 and HIMSoG-8 delegation to Limasawa



HIMSoG members get a briefing from Mayor Petracorta

nutrition practices, with the intention of convincing other local government units that these practices are doable and worth emulating.

The media-group focused investigative-journalism on the municipality's Best Practices that are dealing on food sufficiency, exclusive breastfeeding, pregnant-women care, home-savings, healthy lifestyle, food fortification, infant and young child feeding (IYCF) responsible parenthood, sanitation, and alternative fund sourcing for nutrition.

HIMSoG-8 also delved into the exemplary leadership of Limasawa Mayor Petracorta, reputed as "maka nutrisyon", the dynamism of the Municipal Nutrition Committee—composed of all village chiefs, and headed by the mayor, and the high functionality of Women's Health Teams, Breastfeeding Support Groups and other role players such as the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer



Media group HIMSoG goes around the island of Limasawa to document its best practices in nutrition

(MNAO), and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs).

The island's innovation to ensure supply of fresh vegetables are "Gulay Bawat Bahay, Hahaba Ang Buhay", where all households, schools and villages are encouraged to maintain a vegetable garden; "Halaman ng Bayan Para sa

Kalusugan ng Mamamayan", a massive food production in the island; "Each One Plant One", local ordinance directing every resident to plant a variety of vegetable and any kind of tree; and Best Barangay Garden and Best School Garden, a yearly search to encourage people to maintain their gardens. (JCG)



Limasawa counts on external support **to** sustain **nutrition** programs

By Sarwell Q. Meniano

After receiving the country's highest nutrition award, this historic town is still counting on outward sources to finance various nutrition programs but what counts most is their internal commitment to sustain the malnutrition-free

the first local government unit that received the Nutrition Honor Award.

Mayor Melchor Petracorta, in a recent media interaction here said that the recognition was achieved through financial support from various sources backed with countless efforts of local officials and the community in eliminating barriers.

"Even if we didn't ask for it, local and foreign groups have been coming here to extend different forms of support to nutrition activities because they are confident that their resources will not be put into waste," Petracorta said.

The most commendable effort is that members of the municipal nutrition committee sometime use their personal money to feed the underweight children.

The community also contributes



Nutrition evaluators take the 450 steps to the first cross planted in Philippine soil

funds to the feeding program by dropping in coin banks placed at the municipal hall, barangay centers and schools, proceeds of which are used to feed malnourished children.

"We establish linkage with non-government organizations and people's organizations for supplemental feeding and provision of vitamins to all children, pregnant and lactating mothers in the locality," Petracorta



Francis Batula interviews a nutrition stakeholder.

status in the coming years.

For more than four centuries, this town has been known as the "cradle of Christianity" in the Philippines being the site of the First Mass. Last year, adding to the island's tag is the "cradle of nutrition" in Eastern Visayas being



Ray Gaspay interviews Mayor Petracorta.



Commemoration of the 491st anniversary of the First Mass



NNC-8 Ms. Carina Santiago with HIMSoG-8 delegation evaluates an Agri-Trade Fair booth during the First Mass in the Philippines 491st anniversary celebration in Limasawa Island.

added.

Municipal Budget Officer Isabelo Juanico, Jr. said that in 2011, they only set aside P160,000 for nutrition programs in the entire year but expenses for nutrition-related services could

reach up to P300,000.

“Outside aid is way higher than what we actually allocated. Various groups came in to give assistance in forms of cash, vitamins, foods, and services,” Juanico added.

As a 6th class island town in Southern Leyte, Limasawa got the lowest IRA share in Region with an appropriation of only P20.86 million this year, up to four times lower than the amount allotted for first class municipalities in the region.



Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta welcomes NNC Executive Director Maria-Bernardita T. Flores (right) and Ms. Carina Z. Santiago to Limasa.

Vegetable gardening...

(from page 13)

home gardening.

Among the most common vegetables in the town are malunggay, pechay, green leafy vegetables, squash, and beans.

A school in a nearby village of Triana also established a garden with about 50% of the 1.5 hectares school premises have been devoted to cultivation of vegetables.

"Grade V pupils maintain the biggest garden but other grade levels are also involved in cultivation in different parts



Household and communal gardens are encouraged under "Gulay Bawat Bahay, Hahaba Ang Buhay" Program of Limasawa LGU.

of the school. We want them to apply what they have learned from Edukasyong Pangkalusugan

at Pangtahanan," said Flordeliza Daloperi, head teacher of Triana Elementary School.

Limasawa fathers support...

(from page 12)

are exclusively breastfeeding their babies from birth to six month and are providing their children with complementary foods while continuing breastfeeding from six months up to two years of age.

Limasawa's performance in terms of breastfeeding is remarkable compared to the



Haircut and massage are among the skills trainings provided to fathers of malnourished children to boost their income.



national figure. The 7th National Nutrition Survey revealed that among infants 0-5 months old, only 36 out of every 100 infants were exclusively breastfed; only 37 of every 100 were breastfed at the same time given complementary foods and as many as 27 out of every 100 infants were given other milk and other foods.

Breastfeeding during the first six months of a child's life is deemed crucial since it cuts the risk of chronic diseases and leads to overall better development.

'Good Nutrition Through Good Governance and Teamwork'

Malnutrition spins off to a vicious cycle that has long-term consequences. If not cut, is passed on to the succeeding generations, ultimately reducing a nation's over-all productivity, stunting economic growth and exacerbating poverty.

A considerable number of underweight children in Limasawa had been the focus of the Local Government Unit. Challenged with food security due to lack of appropriate lands suitable for rice production and the difficulty in the delivery of basic health services due to its topography as the six barangays that comprise the island are separated away from each other by kilometers and its geographical setting as an island.

A closer focus and greater attention to the Nutrition Program of the Municipality had started last 2004, with 57 malnourished preschool children and 48 school children, a total of 105.

The Municipal Officials believed that investing in nutrition is good governance. Guided by its vision, mission and objectives to provide sufficient livelihood to every resident, proper nutrition education, healthy and nutritious foods to every household and clean environment to avoid all forms of diseases, the LGU thru the organization of the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) implemented the seven impact programs in nutrition and made innovative programs for the achievement of its goal- to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition among preschool and school children in the Municipality of Limasawa.

The Municipal Agriculture Office as one of the lead agencies in the implementation of the program, provided seeds, seedlings, planting materials and technical assistance in intensifying food production at home, at school and at the barangays. A strong advocate to "Food Always In The Home" (FAITH) strategy, the MNC launched the "Gulay Bawat Bahay, Hahaba Ang Buhay" Program wherein all households, schools and barangays were encouraged to maintain vegetable gardens for vegetable consumption at the household level.

Women's Health Teams (WHTs) and Breastfeeding Support Groups (BSGs) were organized in the barangays to monitor child's nutritional status from its conception. Pregnant women were closely tracked by the WHTs using wall monitoring charts to ensure that they complete their prenatal visits, develop their birth plans in cooperation with the RHU, barangay officials and health workers, and are monitored until post-delivery. The BSGs on the other hand, assisted lactating mothers in initiating breastfeeding immediately after birth and helped mothers to have successful and longer duration-breastfeeding.

The MSWDO spearheaded the Feeding Program for the malnourished pre-school and schoolchildren with funds sourced out from the regular nutrition budget and solicitations from NGOs and other civic organizations which also provided medicines and vitamins to the children, pregnant and lactating mothers. The Local Chief Executive directed the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) and Elementary School Class Advisers to monitor the weekly growth status of the pre-

school and monthly weighing for the schoolchildren, respectively. Further, the MSWDO took charge in the Philhealth enrolment of the residents especially the indigents and families with malnourished children wherein the Municipality paid the yearly premium for these enrollees, with counterpart from the Provincial Government.

Different skills trainings on massage, pedicure, hair-cutting, food processing, swine, goat raising and small engine mechanic were provided to the families with malnourished children to help augment the family's income in order to have the affordability to buy nutritious foods and provide sufficient food intake among family members. Motor bancas with fishing paraphernalia were also provided to these families since fishing is the main source of income of this 6th class island-municipality.

With diligent supervision in the implementation of the massive food production in the locality as one of the impact programs, the need for the supply of vegetables had been addressed as the Municipal, Barangay, school and household gardens had produced the many varieties of vegetables with the use of organic fertilizer from the vermiculture project of the Office of the Municipal Mayor. Vegetables were sold at the Municipal Food Terminal at lower prices for the affordability of the low-income residents. To showcase all agricultural and fishery products of the residents, they were displayed during the Inter-Barangay Booth Contest done twice a year, every March and July. Winners were awarded with cash prizes. To motivate more the residents and school children on vegetable gardening, a yearly search on "Best Barangay Garden" and "Best School Garden" had been administered by the Municipal Agriculture Office with the support of the PNP Personnel every December with cash prizes given to the winners.

The close tracking of pregnant women by the RHU Personnel and the WHTs in each barangay registered a zero mortality rate since 2007 up to present. All infants from 0-6 months old were exclusively breastfed, with exemptions in some cases, as the BSGs were vigilant in their responsibilities in monitoring, assisting and counseling lactating mothers. With this, there were only a few cases of infantile diarrhea and pneumonia. Since 2007, coverage of the Garantisadong Pambata (GP) for April and October were reported to always have reached 100%. Micronutrient supplementation such as the giving of Vitamin A and Iron for infants, preschool and school children, pregnant and lactating mothers and the implementation on the use of fortified foods helped the children's normal growth. As of 2010, all the 89 sari-sari stores, 1,310 households, and 6 school canteens used iodized salt and the 2 bakeries utilized the fortified flour. Stores and canteens sold the Sangkap Pinoy Sealed products. The Municipal Food Terminal and NFA retailers in the locality sold I-rice to help supply the Iron requirement for a healthy body.

The Municipality of Limasawa had been recognized by the Philhealth- Southern Leyte as the LGU

over the other 17 other LGUs in the Province of Southern Leyte with the highest Philhealth enrollees as it has already reached 200% of the target. Presently, out of the 1,310 households, 847 heads of families are Philhealth card holders and by 2011, all households should be Philhealth members as envisioned by the Local Chief Executive.

The regular supplemental feeding to all malnourished preschool and school children had helped in bringing up the nutritional status of children from below normal low and below normal very low to normal weights as of age. With all the nutrition related programs and activities implemented by the Local Government Unit of Limasawa thru the Municipal Nutrition Committee to address the malnutrition problem among children in the locality, the prevalence of malnutrition among pre-school children from a high of 8.8 % in 2004 to 2.61% in 2009 and 6.0% to 2.17% among schoolchildren, an average of 1.2% reduction in the prevalence of malnutrition from 2004-2009 among preschool and .77 % among school children, from 105 malnourished children in 2004, it was reduced to 39 children in 2009. Year 2010 data has another method of calculation, therefore could not be compared to the previous years due to the use of Child Growth Standard method implemented by the National Nutrition Council. It registered 17 malnourished preschool children and 55 school children.

In 2006, year after the nutrition program of the LGU had taken off, it was awarded as a winner in nutrition program in Region 8 and in 2007 and 2008 it got the award as a Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) and in 2009, it got the First Year Maintenance Award and subsequently, in 2009 the Second Year Maintenance Award, just last a month ago, it was evaluated to qualify for the highest nutrition award ever in the country, the Nutrition Honor Award.

To propel the stakeholders with strong motivation in the identification and implementation of the different programs and activities in addressing malnutrition among children in the municipality, the Municipal Nutrition Committee organized and crafted the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP) at the start of every ensuing year with the replication by the barangays which also organized their Barangay Nutrition Committees and made Barangay Nutrition Action Plans reconciling with that of the municipal level.

The formulation of the Nutrition Action Plan has been done with the participation of the MNC members (Sangguniang Bayan Members, Representatives from National Agencies- DILG and PNP, Municipal Government Department Heads, Barangay Captains, School Administrators and NGO Representatives- fisherfolks, farmers, cooperatives and local water district).

With good working linkages to several government and non-government organizations in the locality, nearby provinces and elsewhere—which include a German Foundation, the PCSO, Manila and Cebu-based civic and humanitarian groups, they have become the LGU's perpetual partners in the feeding

program and provision of vitamins and medicines to the children, the pregnant and lactating women.

Since the LGU does not have any available land to develop into a Municipal Garden, a family offered their land for free to be utilized as such in the implementation of the LGU's program "Gulayan ng Bayan para sa Kalusogan ng Mamamayan."

For the sustenance of the feeding program for the malnourished children and due to limited LGU budget for the nutrition program, the Municipal Nutrition Committee and Barangay Nutrition Committees aside from the solicitations, have given voluntary monetary contribution every month for the supply of a glass of milk and egg a day for the malnourished children with parents' counterpart to do the preparation of such feeding at the Nutrition Center everyday with supervision of the BNS for the preschoolers and the assigned teachers for the schoolchildren.

The nutrition program of the Municipality does not only center for the children but to the adults as well. Every quarter, residents aging 20 years old and above reported to the Barangay Nutrition Outpost for the calculation of their Body Mass Index (BMI). Those with BMI categorized as normal at risk, overweight and obese were encouraged to participate in the "Healthy Lifestyle" campaign which had been intensified by the issuance of an Executive Order (4:00 o'clock Habit) for a one hour exercise among Municipal Officials and Employees every Monday afternoon and sports hour every Friday afternoon. Barangays also did the same in their respective jurisdiction. Contest on mass exercise had been done every Culmination Program of Nutrition Month, participated by different age levels in the barangays for massive participation.

One identified causes of malnutrition in the municipality is the lack of proper personal hygiene among residents. The LGU launched the "Handog Pamasko sa LGU" Program. Each household with no toilet was given one toilet bowl, 1 bag cement and 2 iron bars after a hole for the septic tank had been presented and inspected by the Rural Sanitary Inspector.

Parents of the malnourished children participated in the "Fun Run and Walk" on which the proceeds was used for the feeding program.

Generally and normally practiced all over the world, mostly the women or mothers were the one's taking charge in caring the children, thereby, at any case, the mothers or the women at home should be equipped with apt knowledge in giving good nutrition to the children.

The Local Government Unit of Limasawa, thru the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) felt the partiality in that kind of responsibility. Taking into consideration that the responsibility in taking care of the children does not only center and lies on the women at home but eventually to the fathers, as well. The MNC took the involvement of the men and implemented the "Tatay Ko, Kaagapay sa Kalusogan Ko" Program. All men specially the fathers in the barangays were gathered at their respective Barangay Hall or Barangay Health Station every quarter for a lecture on good nutrition, breastfeeding and responsible parenthood administered by the Rural Health Unit, MNC and BNC. With this men in the locality have already the knowledge on right position on breastfeeding, cup

and complementary feeding which greatly helped the mothers in taking care of their infants. Further, men were encouraged to attend the yearly training on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and the "Pabasa sa Nutrition" together with the MNC and BNC members as required by the Local Chief

Executive. Presently practiced in the locality, the mother and the father joined together in monitoring the nutritional status of their children.

Due to budgetary constraints of the LGU to finance the nutrition program, different innovative resource generations were made. Coin banks were placed at the Municipal Hall, Barangay Halls, schools and even at the Provincial Capitol Building and proceeds were used for the feeding program of the barangays and schools. Buntis Baby Banks were maintained in the RHU and BHSs to help pregnant women save money when they give birth. During prenatal visits, the pregnant dropped coins or bills in their own bank while attending health and nutrition personnel gave lecture and advice on exclusive breastfeeding and healthy eating practices for pregnant women.

Other fund generation activities included the yearly donation from fines of illegal fishing and ten percent (10%) from the proceeds of all diving fees, all covered with Municipal Ordinances. Proceeds from yearly Christmas Raffles had made the MNC bought 12 units of Detecto weighing scales which were given to the six barangays and six schools in the municipality for them to have the most accurate figure in determining the weights and heights. The LGU had also provided Height Boards in all Nutrition Posts to measure heights of infants and preschoolers.

The forty two MNC members were grouped into six and each assigned in the barangays to monitor the nutritional status of the malnourished children. Consultative meetings with the parents of the malnourished children were held every quarter for close monitoring and guidance for parents in taking care of their malnourished children. Parents were to report to the MNC monitoring groups on their problems encountered as to the eating habit of their children. BNCs took the daily monitoring of the malnourished children in their respective jurisdiction, together with their BNS.

To encourage the families with malnourished children in preparing the right kind of food for their children, a "Cookfest by Family" or on the spot cooking was held, each entry should composed with the father, mother and child. The entry recipe should be with high nutritive value but low price and less cooking time. Cash prizes were given to the top five families.

"Healthy Baby Contest" was made to promote exclusive breastfeeding among infants 0-6 months old and the "Biggest Loser" to promote healthy lifestyle activities and awareness on good nutrition to have a healthy body afar from risk.

To ensure sustainability of the nutrition program of the Municipality, the Local Chief Executive issued Executive Orders for the implementation of the "Each One, Plant One" (required all Municipal Officials, Employees and MNC Members to maintain backyard gardens), "Four O'clock Habit" (required all municipal officials and employees to participate in the weekly

exercise, every Friday at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon), Monthly monitoring of Class Advisers on the Nutritional Status of the schoolchildren and the imposition of fines for non-participation of the Four O'clock Habit. For a stronger campaign on "Each One, Plant One", a Municipal Ordinance 2005-07 was enacted which required every household to plant and grow Kalamunggay tree.

Municipal Ordinance No. 2010- 13 was enacted requiring all lactating mothers to exclusively breastfeed their 0-6 month old infants and imposed penalties for violations thereof. Executive Order 51 or the Milk code was also adopted or by the Sangguniang Bayan of the Municipality. Anti-Smoking Ordinance (Municipal Ordinance 2010-14) was also adopted and implemented to ensure good health among residents.

The Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) evaluates the efficiency of the implementation and accomplishments of the programs and activities during its regular meeting held every quarter with the Municipal Mayor as the Presiding Officer being the Committee Chairman. All offices and agencies concerned in the implementation of the activities gave reports as to the accomplishments and gave suggestions for a far better output.

On the other hand, the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) have a regular quarterly meeting presided by the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO). Reports on the nutritional status of the children in their respective barangays were given and OPT results were evaluated. The Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO) and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) were sent to attend provincial/regional seminars and trainings for enrichment and updating of information to always get tract on the nutrition program of the country through the National Nutrition Council.

The Women's Health Teams and Breastfeeding Support Groups of the Barangays through an Executive Order issued by the Punong Barangays were given the responsibility to monitor, counsel and assist the women in their respective jurisdiction from the start of conception. In turn, the BNSs relate their newly-acquired knowledge and skills to all concerned during feedback sessions.

Every Friday, pregnant women reported to the Health Center for their prenatal and lecture given by the health workers and they were given supplemental feeding. This program was launched last July 2010- "Prenatal sa Buntis, Pakan-on ang Buntis". The food supplies were given by the pregnant themselves and were prepared by the BHWs and WHTs in their respective barangays.

At the onset of the implementation of the nutrition program in the Municipality, the locales insisted to stay foot on their old way of caring the children, among others was the right age for an infant to be given complementary feeding, believing that what they have been doing and giving to their children were good enough and sufficed the nutritional needs of the children to be healthy. Thus, persistent and constant visitations, counseling sessions, bench classes, nutrition education campaigns and advocacies opened-up a wider horizon for adaptation among the parents.



Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta with nutrition leaders celebrates a day of achievement



Mayor Melchor P. Petracorta and a contingent from Limasawa take pride in the NHA



Produced by NNC-8 in cooperation with HIMSoG-8

