

Reyes' formula for success

"Magsikap, magtipid lalo na pag nag-uumpisa pa lang sa pangkabuhayang proyekto at ang mga gastusin ay di dapat sosobra sa kinikita."

The Reyes couple believes that through perseverance and simple living, their family will overcome poverty. This is the story of their transformation from sheer poverty to improved quality of life.

Looking Back

The Reyes family belongs to the Set 3 beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program of Floridablanca, Pampanga. The family was however one of those tagged not enrolled resulting to non-subsidy for one (1) year. Upon completion of the requirements, they received retroactive payments of P15,000.00. Rizalita, 43, recalled that she cried with joy when she received the amount, "Nuon lang po ako nakahawak ng ganuong kalaking pera kaya nagpapasalamat ako sa pamahalaan sa tulong na ibinigay sa pamilya ko''.

With the P15,000.00 cash grants on hand, the family prioritized the most important things which include the food and school supplies of their three children enrolled in the program; down payment of one motorcycle worth P3,400.00; and P6,000.00 as payment for the two Aetas whom they commissioned to plant ampalaya and string beans.

The family used the remaining P2,600.00 as capital in trading vegetables and charcoal from the upland areas which they brought to Guagua and Floridablanca public markets. After a month, they started harvesting the vegetables planted by the two Aetas which resulted to more sales and profit.

Before their inclusion in the Pantawid Pamilya in 2010, Joseph Reyes, 45, worked as a farm laborer earning P200.00 a day during planting season and 4-5 sacks of rice during harvesting

season. Rizalita used to do laundry jobs two or three times a week. Between planting and harvesting seasons, Joseph was jobless.

To cope with their basic needs, the family had to approach sari-sari store owners in the barangay for their daily food subsistence through credit basis. She said that they could hardly meet the educational expenses of their children especially during lean months of farming. "Life was so hard because of the rebuff we received from our relatives and neighbors whenever we tried to borrow money from them," Rizalita lamented.

Their house is a one-room affair made of light materials, cogon and sawali. During rainy season, they sometimes experienced uncomfortable nights because the strong rain would usually rouse them from sleep soaked with rain. They could not afford electricity so a lampara (improvised lamp) was all they had that time.

"We were a 'nobody' in the community because of our economic status. That's why we felt very inferior and had to remain on the sidelines for so long," Rizalita said. She said that the financial difficulty they had for a long time was their motivation for their hard work and for not spending any amount for unnecessary expenses.

Things took a turn for the better

"With the income derived from our livelihood projects: planting rice to the agricultural lot pawned to us and the backyard piggery, we can now see positive changes in our living condition," Rizalita said. According to her, their monthly income now ranges from P30,000-40,000.00 and that they already finished paying the motorcycle with side car which they use in their business. Their second motorcycle, which is being used as school service for their children, is now on the second year of payment. "Our children are now comfortable in going to school because they don't have to walk very far,"

Rizalita said.

The construction of our three-bedroom house is now underway, Rizalita said with a happy note on her voice. Although their present dwelling is made of cogon and sawali, it is a far cry from the one they used to have, Rizalita added. They used a lampara before but now they already have some appliances such as TV set and DVD player, electric fans, beds with mattresses, rice cooker and some electronic gadgets.

Rizalita said that she has gained confidence in dealing with people and can now express her ideas without fear of being rebuffed. She has to attribute this to the Family Development Sessions (FDS) and the trainings and seminars that she attended as a parent leader of the Pantawid Pamilya. As a result, she was elected as classroom secretary for her two sons enrolled in Grades IV and V. She is also one of the Barangay Health Workers in their community and was elected president of the Self-Employment Assistance Kaunlaran (SKA) because of her remarkable ideas during the Business Management Training (BMT) held in their town.

Meanwhile, Joseph personally attends to the agricultural lot pawned to them where they yield 30 sacks of palay every four months.

There is also a notable improvement in the health of their children because of the sufficient and nutritious food intake they have. Their academic standing in school has also improved, Rizalita proudly said.

Gains of the Sustainable Livelihood Program

In 2013, the family had also benefitted from the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the DSWD which they invested (P10,000.00) in expanding their livelihood endeavor, cogon and buho trading. Rizalita said that they are getting an additional profit of P1,000.00 per week.

We believe in the saying, 'save for the rainy days' that's why we opened a savings account after my attendance to the BMT, Rizalita said. She was convinced on the importance of savings and had learned how to prioritize the needs of her family especially the education of her children.

Today the family earns more than enough for their basic needs. Rizalita has this lesson to impart to other beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilya and Sustainable Livelihood Program: "Magsikap, magtipid lalo na pag nag-uumpisa pa lang sa pangkabuhayang proyekto at ang mga gastusin ay di dapat sosobra sa kinikita." ### (SMU/SLP)