

PL Irene

☒ Irene Bestil is one of the Parent Leaders of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) from the province of Bataan. Her family belongs to the Set 5A beneficiaries who became a Pantawid members last 2012. They are residents of Mabolo St., Bagong Silang, City of Balanga Bataan since 2001. She and her husband had been living together since 1997, but only got married last 2014. They have four children namely Arvin (20 years old), Venerando Jr. (18 years old), Princess Jamaica (13 years old) and Precious Ann (11 years old). Irene is a Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) in Barangay Bagong Silang, while her husband worked as a tricycle diver.

Irene Bestil became a Parent Leader last January 2015. Irene is already a BNS at that time, and is very active in community activities. She has done her best so that she can serve her group members well. Since then, she was a very responsible, active and dependable Parent Leader.

The family had a simple and happy life, even if Irene works as a BNS and Parent Leader at the same time. However, an unfortunate event happened. It was only last September 2017, when Venerando Sr. met a vehicular accident. He was confined at the hospital and was comatose for almost 1 week. The family have exerted all their efforts to produce money and allotted all their time so that Venerando Sr. will survive. Unfortunately, Venerando did not survive and died last October 2, 2017.

It was a very difficult time for the whole family, since Irene was left alone to take care of her children. Because of this, she suffered depression. According to her children, they cannot talk to her especially during the wake. Even after the burial, Irene was not able to eat or get enough sleep. She was in that state for almost 2 months. Because of this, her duty as a Parent Leader was affected, that the City Link decided to

designate a reliever.

Irene was frequently home-visited and counselled by her City Link, along with the CSO representatives in their area. Not only that, she was being advised and visited by her friends and co-workers. Her Pantawid members also helped her to recover and became her confidants, especially when she felt extreme loneliness and weakness. She was very grateful to her Pantawid family for the big help and that she was assured that they were always there for her.

Losing her husband was indeed a very painful experience, however, she was enlightened by her Pantawid family led by their City Link, the Pastors (from the CSOs in their area) and her co-workers that her children need her and that she needs to move on. Irene then dedicated herself in taking care of her children and spent her time working at the barangay health center. She cannot fully say that she has recovered from the grief and depression, but she realized that her children need her and that she has to be strong for their welfare.

As a Parent Leader, Irene is an efficient one. She acknowledges text messages sent to her by her City Link, and readily cascades the information and communication to her members. She encourages her members to comply with the program's conditionalities on Family Development Sessions, Health and Education Non-compliant members are being home visited by her. She is very reliable and has genuine concern for her members.

Being a Barangay Nutrition scholar, Irene has been consistently prioritizing the health of her children, her neighbors (both Pantawid and non-Pantawid beneficiaries), not only physically but also mentally, spiritually and socially. She was able to educate them of the importance of health and provides information on the different health services that the Barangay Health Center can offer. She has been actively participating in activities such as seminars for BNS/BHWs,

weighing activities, vitamins supplementation, deworming, immunization and house to house visits. She has been a volunteer BNS since 2014, wherein they do not have salaries, yet are only receiving allowances from the barangay and city hall.

Irene is also active in community activities such as clean up drives, tree-planting activities and Brigada Eskwela. She participates annually in the Barangay Week and helps in the program. Aside from this, Irene also participates in the exercise program, Hataw, and is serving as the focal person of the people in their Barangay, whenever they have concerns from various partner agencies. She also attends Bible Studies every Saturdays and do home visits on the same day.

Irene Bestil has served as an inspiration not only to her neighbors but to her co-Parent Leaders and members of the Pantawid Pamilya Program, as they are living as a happy, loving and supportive family. She has been a role model to her members, since she has been through a lot, and yet, she still stood up and serve both the program, her family and the community. It is true that coping with the loss of someone in one of life is the biggest challenge, but with the help of the family and a strong support system, it will be conquered by anyone.

Written by: Abigail Galang

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