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**SOUTH UPI, MAGUINDANAQ / 22 March 2021.** *It's two o'clock in the morning. The weather is cold and it is dark. But, like many of the families in Brgy. Looy in South Upi, Maguindanao. Flora Lamigan, 31 has to get up to join the queue of those who like her, need to fetch water from the deep well located in the hidden and lower part of the village.*

In the Philippines, the dry season is approaching, and the whole community is anticipating the same scenario. In the country, summer season starts by March until May.

According to Flora, the deep well is the only source of water available in the village when it is dry season.

“During this period, spring and other sources of water in our barangay run dry. This deep well is the only one left, since it is located in lowland of our mountainous community”, Flora said.

South Upi is known to be a summer capital of Maguindanao province. It is found in the mountains of the province and it gives cool breeze, just enough for the hot weather from City and other lowland communities. Farm lands are rich giving plenty of agricultural products, the main source of income for many in the whole town.



“We have good life here in Br

gy. Looy. Life is peaceful, everyone is living with harmony. We are tri-people here in the village, but there was never a conflict”, a barangay council said.

Our children have access to education. We have basic and higher schools here in our barangay, so there are no children left behind”, another village leader stated.

Frima Marcon, 47, a barangay health worker reports that the community health station is operating and giving basic medical services to the people in the village. “People here are healthy”.

“Day-to-day sustenance is also easy; we have rich farm lands. We just have to work and be diligent to produce food for our families”, Eva Zaballero, 58 (laborer) told.

Brgy. Looy is 30 minutes away from town center. There is good road so people have easy access to the nearest market to get basic commodities.

So, what can you ask for more? The project partner asked.

Water! Members of the community unanimously said during a meeting in the village while the construction of water-system project was on-going in February 2021.

“We really need better water system that provides clean and safe water for our families. At present, we rely on few available sources in our village, which is difficult, especially during drought”, a village leader said.

Other families who can afford would avail clean water by buying from town center with water refilling business.

“But not all have enough money to buy clean water. It is expensive, so some opted to access from the water source in the community”, Catherine Mobantan, 31 (laborer) told.

### Community-based employment



The implementation of the project promotes community-based employment where fair and decent works are essential. Community members from all sectors are informed about the project and explained of the importance of their engagement in project implementation.

For this project, there were 250 workers employed who were all members of the community in Brgy. Looy. Seventy-five of this number are women. Before the project construction, series of training and orientation were organized to equip the CBO- workers of proper knowledge and information about community-based water system management.

Tasks were distributed based on the capacity and opportunity for each member of the community labor force.

Women workers took part in excavation for piping and perform daily records checking and monitoring of health condition of their fellow workers. Men usually take heavier workloads during the construction.

### Women's engagement

Flora was born in Brgy. Looy. She grew and had her own family in the village. She is glad to be part of the project. The chance to see other fellow women and work together while earning income to help sustain the family is a fulfillment, for her.

With four children, she shares hardships in getting water from the deep well.

“It was hard because we have to go down and up in getting water. For four liters of water, it usually takes 8-10 minutes to fill the container. One really has to wait and mothers find

it harder because we have children at home, like me, my youngest is still one year old”, Flora told.

Another woman worker expressed that “the experience is fun”.

“We are happy about our work, we are earning while we are helping the whole community”, she said.

She shared about time management that they learned from involvement in the project.

“We have to manage our time for our household duties and for project tasks expected of us”,



### Safety and social protection

The project also considered safety of the community workers. Protective gears were provided to every worker.

Social protection was introduced and lectured as part of the promotion of decent employment. For Brgy. Looy, workers enrolled to Social Security System (SSS), while others declined to register with PhilHealth. The municipal local government unit of South Upi agreed to provide of the health insurance of the workers.

Decent employment likewise means fair pay to the workers.

“We received 300 pesos daily wage for this work with the project. This is far better than the 150.00 pesos minimum daily rate we received from before”, the CBO stated.



## Access to safe water in BARMM

In its development plan launched early this year, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) reported that in 2018, 55% of households in ARMM have access to safe drinking water.

Stories of difficult access to clean water can still be heard from many communities in the region, which indicates the remaining works to be done to help improve the condition in the BARMM in terms of water availability.



For this project, responding the to the needs of the community like Brgy. Looy is one main objective while promoting fair employment at the community level, by improving capacities of the locals on project management. This approach helped in raising awareness about decent work, rights, roles, and protection of employer and employees. Respect to community culture and tradition and gender sensitivity; environmental safety are also significant factors being considered.

The project is expected for completion by March 2021. Aside from Brgy. Looy, two other villages in North Upi namely Renti and Rifao are also recipients of the project with the same package on community-based employment and water system project.



*Test run in one of the tap stands in Looy, South Upi.*