



BUDYONG

Bases sa Gubatnon

The Official Publication of the Local Government Unit of Gubat, Sorsogon

THAT WEAVE OF COLORS CALLED SALANIGO

Gubat, Sorsogon --- Bare hands thread dyed abaca fibers. Some hands prepare the mat and the others separate the finest ones among the bulk. Women here come together to make the best of their idle time and weaving is their favorite one. Through the years, they have mastered the art of weaving indigenous slippers. They knew it by heart. They grew up learning its process.

Some days, they prepare special ones. There are seven of them at most, but orders from downtown seemed nonstop. Before the day

ends, a colorful, hand-woven slipper comes to life, a creation known in this town as *salanigo*.

Salanigo, a weave design of two colors follows an *under-two-and-over-two* matting process. The output creates an elaborate diagonal or twilled effects applied to native slippers. Its daintiness comes with the use of S2-type abaca fibers stripped and weaved by bare hands of local artisans. Bicol and Samar regions have used the design for centuries originally for walls.

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"I thought the usual design of slippers would not buy the interest of people in the poblacion. Whereas, the traditional sawali wall designs appeared more elaborate, sophisticated and modern"

-Lola Pina, 77

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MESSAGES



Less has been told about Gubat. Aside from few historical accounts and news clippings about surfing, no story from its people has reached the consciousness of many.


History can attest to the splendor of the bygone days. Centuries before surfing became known in barangay Buenavista, early traders flocked in town as a major trading center of abaca industry in the 1800s.

The time has come for Gubat to rise further. We are now working together to be as competitive as other localities. We do not need to wait for that perfect moment. We only need to tell our own story and continue creating our history.

For a local government office, publishing a newsletter may be as daunting as it seems, but the task needs to be done. It may be long overdue, but it warrants

welcome.

It is with excitement that finally, *Budyong: Boses san Gubatnon* came into being. May this newsletter encourage all Gubatnons to partake in the continuing progress of our town. Go Gubat!


Sharon Rose Glipo-Escoto
Municipal Mayor

To put up a newsletter about Gubat means good news for public service. It only shows that we are progressing as a local government unit. We are now heading towards a real democratic and transparent government, as this is one tool of communicating and conveying the local government's efforts to the people that we serve.

Together with the Executive Branch, the Sangguniang Bayan is working hand in hand to attain Gubat's vision. With the people's support, a day will come for Gubat to become the center of trade, industry, agro-ecotourism, and quality education in Sorsogon province. This newsletter is one way in achieving that goal as stories and news about agriculture, tourism, and education will form part of its content.

While we accept that there are limitations in realizing Gubat's vision, we maintain deep trust on the capability of our work force that these adversities, no matter how immense they may seem, are still surmountable.

To the people of Gubat and everyone that this newsletter seeks to reach, please enjoy the first issue of *Budyong: Boses san Gubatnon*. The pages may be few for now but we believe that it will improve in its succeeding issues. May the stories included here stimulate active participation among the constituency so that we can all work together for the benefit of our people and our town.

Mabuhay an mga Gubatnon! Go Gubat!




Sixto F. Estareja
Vice Mayor

EDITOR'S NOTE

A little known town has now come to terms with its own spectacle. Since the day when riding with the waves has become both a sport and an environmental advocacy through its budding surf spots, Gubat surged to a higher degree of appreciation for the beauty that has long been there, but left unseen. Memoirs of a prosperous town have, through centuries, awaited to be unearthed and continued.

Through *Budyong: Boses san Gubatnon*, the Local Government Unit of Gubat gives the readers a glimpse of Gubat's culture, people, stories and events as it unfolds and transforms through time.

This also serves as a vehicle for bringing the local government closer to the people in order to enhance awareness of its programs, policies, thrusts, and directions.

Fanned by the LGU's desire on reliving the past and bringing back cultural traditions and stories, the editorial team came up with naming this paper, *Budyong: Boses san Gubatnon* (*Voice of Gubatnon*).

In the past, *budyong* or helmet shell played important role in the lives of early settlers of Gubat. Its howling sound served as warning whenever pirates from the south raided communities. It became an early form of communication between the people and the government. Centuries later,

it serves the purpose of giving birth to Gubat's newsletter.

For the maiden issue, *Budyong* lets the readers sojourn through the past, present, and future of Gubat. *Budyong* also presents the highlights of plans, activities, projects, and events geared towards Gubat's vision to become the center of agro-eco tourism, industry, and quality education.

Thus, it is with humility and glee that, through *Budyong*, we could let everyone know how the LGU works to reach that goal. By leafing through its pages, Gubatnons from far-off places would be able to, at the very least, feel the sea breeze that lead to the place called Gubat – our home.



Living the Why: Two Young Millennials Share Why they Chose to Stay in Gubat



Left: Justine Feratero; Right: Joyce Nicolas

There comes a time in a person's life when service calls and pressing situation brings someone home.

Gubat, a coastal town in the southernmost tip of Luzon, 19 kilometers from capital Sorsogon city, has bred successful doctors, lawyers, high-ranking uniformed officials, teachers, nurses, engineers and other professions acclaimed and considered noble by many.

Many also flew overseas in search of greener pastures. Nobody could blame them. Such are life choices. They have families to feed and dreams to chase. Gubat stayed, waiting for its children to come home when they are old and weary, even if it would take forever. Only few stayed.

For millennials, Justine and Joyce, both 23, the story is different. They studied at the country's premier university, University of the Philippines Los Baños, then headed home after graduating to take a different path, less travelled and least appreciated, by working in the local government.

In a Time Magazine article, *millennial generation* or simply, *millennials* are defined as those born between the 1980s and 2000s. They are now in their mid-twenties and early thirties. The same article also calls them the "generation Y". This generation is

now in the peak of their careers and occupies significant part of the workforce, not just as employees, but increasingly as leaders.

In the same article, the millennial generation is characterized as "lazy, narcissistic, and prone to jump from one job to another." On a more positive note, a US Today article and other studies suggest that millennials are more open-minded especially when it comes to liberal rights. They are also described in ways such as "upbeat, confident and more receptive to new ideas and ways of living."

These generalized characterizations for the young generation of workforce would suggest that they are more unlikely to work in the government especially in the Philippine setting. A few of them, however, suggests otherwise.

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(Continued from page 1) **That weave...**

Local artisans here attribute to Josefina Epino, 77, who hails from upland Manapao village, almost five kilometres from the town center, as the creator of said design.

Lola Pina as villagers fondly calls Epino, came from a family of weavers and abaca fiber strippers. Weaving has been a family enterprise in their village since she was young where mothers are weavers of native slippers, fathers are fiber strippers, and the children would help their parents by separating the fibers and choosing the finest ones. She recalls that her family would weave native slippers made of abaca fibers and coco leaves or *karagumoy*, a palm grass similar to a pineapple plant abundant in the town.

Being a polio survivor for almost all her life and having poor eyesight due to cataract did not stop Lola Pina to hold teeming patience in weaving a complex design for native slippers. She shared that a pair of these slippers would take, at least a day to finish. Due to lack of technology, she weaves with bare hands.

Salanigo artisans hail mostly from the villages of Manapao and Sta Ana, both in this town. Through the years, smallholder abaca farmers and their families from these areas form assembly lines with the men planting abaca and harvesting its fibers. Their children are usually involved in the grade separation of fibers, while women make slippers and other handicraft from abaca fibers.

Birth of Salanigo slippers

Lola Pina spent her whole life weaving. She usually weaves while on a rocker attached to adjacent walls of her room. One day in 1967,



Lola Pina, 77



Salanigo designed slipper that Lola Pina developed in the '60s

she finds the slippers plain and dull so she reinvents a different design that gave birth to *salanigo* slippers.

"I thought the usual design of slippers would not buy the interest of people in the poblacion", Lola Pina shared in Gubatnon dialect.

"Whereas, the traditional sawali wall designs appeared more elaborate, sophisticated and modern", she continued.

On days without school, Lola Pina's nieces would go to their house and learn weaving from her. She then taught and trained them of weaving the *salanigo* design for slippers. One of the nieces married a man from southern village of Sta. Ana where women's groups continued making *salanigo* slippers with the design passed on by Lola Pina.

Transfer of craft

Small fiber craft industries like this rely on inter-generational transmission of skills and knowledge. *Lola Pina*, considered by the local weavers as innovator of *salanigo* slippers, wishes to pass on her craft. As she grew old unmarried and does not have children whom she can directly train, she taught



Color innovations has already applied in the *salanigo* slippers



From *salanigo* slippers to a high-end shoes. A creation by Jojo Bragais using *salanigo* as the featured material.

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her close relatives the intricacy of salanigo hand-weaving.

As years went by, the number of artisans declined due to gaps in the transmission of the complex weaving skill to younger generation. Children of these artisans opted to more sustainable sources of livelihood that require less handiwork and faster income. At present, only 5 to 7 weavers are still active in making salanigo.

Aside from lack of modern artisans, the decline of abaca produce as the primary raw material for salanigo weaving declined incessantly through the years.



S2 fiber, a variety of abaca used for salanigo

Limited supply of raw materials

Lerma Pura, a salanigo weaver from Barangay Sta. Ana said that the sophisticated style of salanigo slippers make these on top of the demand. She lamented, however, the limited abaca supply as raw materials for their product and lack of modern equipment that could make them produce more than before.

Yolanda F. Patriarca, Gubat Municipal Agriculture Officer said that widespread occurrence of three deadly viruses - *abaca bunchy-top virus*, *abaca mosaic* and *abaca bract mosaic* - greatly affected abaca production in the municipality. This *deadly trio* is the main reason behind the decrease of abaca supply in the town despite its increasing global and domestic demand.

Abaca, also known as *Manila hemp* is the world's strongest natural fiber. Its principal uses include pulp and paper, cordage and twine, fiber crafts, textile and fabrics, furniture, composites and construction materials.



Paghag-ot, a process of stripping abaca into fibers

According to the data from the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA), the Philippines supplies 85% of abaca in the world market. Out of fifty-two abaca-growing provinces in the country, Sorsogon is among the top ten producers providing around 14% of the average annual demand.

“The cultural significance of abaca industry in Gubat’s history drives the local government to push for programs that would simultaneously raise the socio-economic and cultural importance of salanigo weaving,”

- Mayor Sharon

In Gubat town, bulk of abaca produce comes from the upland villages of Togawe, Bentuco and Tigkiw before pests and viruses attacked abaca farmlands. On the other hand, smallholders and salanigo artisans reside in Barangays Manapao and Sta. Ana.

Dr. Antonio Lalusin, a professor at

the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines - Los Baños, said that the demand for abaca would continue to increase as more countries are now shifting to the use of natural fibers in their bid to eliminate dependence on materials derived from fossil fuels.

In 2015, abaca fibers only yielded 67,329 metric tons, unable to meet the global average annual demand of 90,000 metric tons.

Reviving old industries

Sharon Rose G. Escoto, Gubat’s local chief executive saw the need for the revival of abaca industry in the town. At the same time, the local government plans to establish handicraft making particularly salanigo slippers as the town’s primary product. She envisions Gubat as an agro-economic and eco-tourism center in Sorsogon province by focusing programs and projects on abaca rehabilitation and strengthening handicraft industries.

“The cultural significance of abaca industry in Gubat’s history drives the local government to push for programs that would simultaneously raise the socio-economic and cultural importance of salanigo weaving,” Escoto said.

In an essay titled “Footnotes to the History of Gubat, Sorsogon”, De La Salle University professor Luis Camara Dery wrote that Gubat became a major trading center of abaca industry in the early 1830s. Collection houses called *almacenes* stood along its old port where abaca fibers docked weekly from Samar and Leyte provinces.

Like salanigo’s matted colors, reviving the old industries weave the stories of the ages past with the present diverse culture. It would eventually create Gubat’s prime product. For *Gubatnons*, salanigo’s radiant colors speak of the town’s identity shelved for years. **end**

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Below, Justine and Joyce, shared their insight on what made them decide to stay in Gubat despite better opportunities that await them outside.

What course did you take up in the University of the Philippines – Los Baños?

Justine: Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness Management.

Joyce: Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Major in Animal Science Specializing in Animal Nutrition.

Given that University of the Philippines is known for teaching their students to serve the people first as they are the so-called “iskolar ng bayan”, how did this principle influence your decision to work for the LGU?

Justine: All the teachings in my alma mater have somehow prepared me for the life after graduation, and what better way to really serve the people than work in the LGU, specifically in Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO), where our clients are farmers and fisherfolk – the ‘people’ we have to serve.

Joyce: I've always felt obliged to serve the country not just because of what my college professors instilled in us but primarily because of the fact that I finished college on three scholarships. Without the financial assistance, I wouldn't be where I am now. And the only way I could think of to give back is to serve as a public servant.

When did you start working in the LGU?

Justine: I started working in MAO as a job order in July 016. Two months later, I was given a permanent position as an Agricultural Technologist.



Joyce and another staff from MAO during a consultation with the farmers in Brgy. Payawin

Joyce: I started the same date as Justine.

Did you have any other job offer or dream job? What are those?

Justine: The truth is, my dream job is not to work for anyone at all, but rather, to have a business of my own, preferably agriculture-related business.

Joyce: My dream job before I entered public service was to be an expert in animal nutrition and be a technical consultant. Before I decided to work in the LGU and even after I've started, I've had other job offers in the animal nutrition industry as animal nutritionist or technical service specialist. I was also offered to teach in a university.

What made you decide to work in the local government?

Justine: To be honest, because it was close to home. I wanted to share the knowledge and skills I have gained to our local farmers. Not only to share but also to apply it. *At nakita ko na mas matututo ako* if I choose to work in the local government. And I am glad that I did!

Joyce: The biggest factors which influenced me to work in the LGU are my dream to serve my town and my parents. I always wanted to be of service to the small farmers of Gubat and working in the LGU seemed to be the perfect way to do it. In addition, I wanted to live with my parents as all my sisters are outside town.

“I always wanted to be of service to the small farmers of Gubat and working in the LGU seemed to be the perfect way to do it.”

- Joyce

Did you choose to apply in Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) or did you have any other department eyed on when you were applying?

Justine: Yes, I specifically applied for a position in the Municipal Agriculture Office as I believed that I

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could apply all the knowledge and skills I have gained in the field of agriculture.

Joyce: I only had MAO as my choice during application.

In your certain years/months in MAO, what have you learned so far in terms of working in the local government?

Justine: In working in MAO, you must have with you tons of patience, a couple of communication skills, a smile that never falters, and a bit of a 'tanggera' in you. ☺

Joyce: I learned that the best way to help our farmers is to listen to them. Firstly, know their needs and concerns, and not to sound too smart when talking to them. Otherwise, you would not get the information you need. I also learned that no matter how badly you want the best for them, the system is there to fail you and crush your dreams. Working in the government is also very much different than working in the private sector. Here, you have to learn by yourself and learn on the process. There is no time for training or mentoring from someone technically equipped.

What is your specific job in MAO? What challenges have you encountered so far in the performance of your job?

Justine: As an agricultural technologist, we are in-charged to do extension works, to extend and transfer knowledge and technologies to our farmers. I am also designated as the Municipal Rice Report Officer. I consolidate all the reports and data on rice needed by the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, and the Regional Office as well.

I had a hard time adjusting as we

were expected to be a generalist. Our clients expected us to know almost everything in the field of agriculture – from how to maintain a good crop stand to how to treat their farm animals to how to handle pest and diseases in crops. ☺ But I don't consider it as a challenge, rather, a way for me to learn and explore new areas in agriculture. At nag-eeenjoy akong matuto! ☺

“I wanted to share the knowledge and skills I have gained to our local farmers. Not only to share but also to apply it. At nakita ko na mas matututo ako if I choose to work in the local government”
- Justine

Joyce: My job in MAO is an agricultural technologist. I work in crop production and fisheries aspects. In crop production, the biggest challenge I have encountered is dealing with difficult, "traditional" farmers, those who do not listen to your explanations and just throw accusations at you without making any sense. In fisheries, I found revising an ordinance most challenging. It requires a lot of time and meetings to make sure everyone affected is well represented and their stand are noted. A lot of times farmers and fisherfolk are always busy with their work so it's not easy to bring them in one place at the same time.

Did you overcome these challenges? How?

Justine: I cannot totally say that I

have overcome all these challenges, as I am still learning. But, bit by bit, I am able to expand my knowledge in agriculture. Hindi na lang ako nakaconcentrate sa isang area, dapat kahit konti meron akong alam sa lahat. And I am proud to say that I gained all these knowledge and skills through trainings and regular interaction with the farmers and fisherfolk.

Joyce: I did. By working with the relevant people and working at nights and on weekends to finish the job. As to my problem with dealing with farmers, I just listened to them and explained my side clearly. If that did not work, I consulted our leader.

What do you think are the qualities that a civil servant must possess in order to effectively deliver the services to its constituents?

Justine: One must have the passion for his work. For with passion, everything else follows – your dedication, hardwork, the eye for quality standards. If you have passion for your work, you will always be willing to take on the extra mile to serve your clients.

Joyce: Empathy, honesty, and the passion to serve the people.

What do you think are the not-so-good practices that need altering inside the government? Please give a maximum of two examples.

Justine: The practices of the government are good. Some of it just needs improvement. Like having too much paper to be filled-out during transactions. We are living in a very hi-tech era, so why not make use of the technologies around. ☺

Joyce: I have identified two examples of practices. First is insufficient monitoring and evaluation. Lots of government projects are not sustained because of

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insufficient follow-up.

These projects do not end upon the receipt of the constituents. To ensure sustainability, responsible government personnel should closely monitor and assist the implementation.

Second is the tendency to settle for mediocrity. As long as we comply to the rules and finish our job, we're happy and done. When, in fact, we can do a lot better, be more efficient and effective, and satisfy our clients, which are the people we serve, a lot more.

Would you recommend working in the government to your contemporaries? Why or why not?

Justine: Of course, it is always nice to give back to the community that molded you to be what and where you are now.

Joyce: I would only recommend for them to work on the government if they have the passion to serve regardless of compensation. Otherwise, they'll just add to the statistics of people leaving for private sector because it's greener pasture there.

Do you still see yourself working in the LGU ten years from now or more? What do you think would make you stay long?

Justine: Yes, I am actually planning to retire in the government. ☺

Joyce: I like to imagine myself still in the government ten years from now or even more. But raising a family can possibly change that. With that said, I think what can make me stay is my effectivity as a public servant and appropriate compensation.

Given your brief experience in the government, what advice would you give to your contemporaries

who might also want to work in the government or who are currently working in the government?

Justine: Just stay focused on your goals and be passionate about your work, be it in the government or NGOs. You will go miles if you are doing what you love and love what you are doing! ☺ And don't forget to load up on patience! ☺

Joyce: If you want to work in the government, you have to have the passion. Cliche but still true. If your goal of being employed is to earn and save money, think otherwise. If you find it difficult handling people when you're in the private sector, you have to know it's more difficult when you're in the public sector. You will serve all types of people, mostly those who are not on the same page with you. It is also essential for you to be emphatic and to understand from their own perspective. **end**

News Flash!

Gubat New Public Market Nearing Completion!

Hamus! Marie Linig!

LGU—Gubat through its MENRO successfully launched the Solid Waste Management Campaign, Hamus! Marie Linig on April 22, 2017. The campaign aims to educate Gubatnons on proper waste segregation to lessen the garbage collected daily.

To kick-off the campaign, a simultaneous beach clean-up participated by various civil society groups, non-government organizations, schools, and government institutions was conducted. It was followed by a short program along Manook Street, in front of the public market where children and students surprised the bystanders and audiences in a flash mob where Marie Linig, the campaign's mascot also showed some moves.

It is a year-long campaign involving everyone. Let us actively participate! Go Green! Go Gubat! Hamus na, Marie linig!



Next issue:

1. Ginubat Festival 2017: Revisits Past Tradition
2. Handawan Island and Tingting River Cruise: Undiscovered Haven
3. The Man behind Eco-friendly Surf Camp

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