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by Eflen M. Francisco

The Convergence Program for Poverty Reduction inspected and monitored the on-going water system and other projects of South Cotabato in Sitio Blit, Ned, Lake Sebu.

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ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

People are having trust issues with the government when the promised programs and projects were not implemented. With the election up and coming, many heated arguments and issues continue, but for the barrio folks who have a hand-to-mouth existence only, they are not particular with the nation's issues and concerns. What is important for them is how to feed their children and put food on their growling stomachs.

With the covid-19 pandemic still around the corner, it has given more anxiety to all especially the poor and the marginalized sector. However, by giving more opportunities to them their anxiety level lessens as their income increases.

But how.

The power of information should not be undermined. Having the right information for the underprivileged will give them the capacity to access all sorts of programs and projects suited for them, be it in education, agriculture, health, social welfare, among others.

For the government whose byword is Tama at Maayos na Serbisyo, all these services are for FREE.

In terms of education, the provincial government of South Cotabato has the Kabugwason Paglaum Scholarship program which gives free education from elementary up to post-graduate studies.

Health care services in all government hospitals in the province are with "No Balance Billing" policy. Patients will no longer be burdened of paying for their hospital fees during confinements

In times of emergencies, the government is willing to provide Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) regardless of economic status.

For the agriculture sector, all means to increase the farmers' yield and income are provided through the implementation of programs such as the free tractor services, palay support program, Plant now Pay later scheme on fruit-bearing trees, etc.

Not to mention the provision of much-needed infrastructures to make the products from farm to market easily transported.

In times of calamities and disasters, assistance is given to the affected individuals.

What more can the people ask for. Those who complain about the insufficiency of programs for the poor are those who do not know how to access them.

Accessibility is the key to the widely disseminated information.

This is the reason, the government is finding ways to go down to the grassroots level to consult and evaluate their true situation. This way, Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) should be tailored to fit their needs, and not those which the government wants for them.

-HYDS



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at 9:00 AM via the Official
facebook page:
The Provincial Government of
South Cotabato**

**KAPIHAN SA
KAPITOLYO**

South Cotabato farmers avail Php24 million farm machineries from Philmech

by HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEV

AT least Php24 million worth of farm machineries were distributed to accredited Farmer Cooperatives and Associations (FCAs) in South Cotabato through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF-Mechanization Component) of Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech).

During the formal machinery distribution held earlier at the Provincial Demonstration Farm, at least 133 various farm machineries were distributed to the qualified FCAs of the province's ten towns and lone city.

These farm machineries are composed of Four Wheel Tractors and Floating Tillers for the Land Preparation;

Precision Seeder, Walk-Behind Transplanters and Riding-type Transplanters for crop establishments; Rice Reaper and Combine harvester for harvesting units, Axial flow and tresher for Threshing Units; and Mobile Rice mill for Milling

Units, among others.

These machineries distributed were procured under the 2019, 2020 and 2021 funds.

The Philmech assures that these units are new and free for the farmers groups.

The Rice Machinery distribution program aims to increase the harvest and income of the farmers by using the appropriate farm mechanization technologies and equipment from planting to milling.



Lined-up farm machinery ready for distribution to the accredited Farmer Cooperatives and Associations (FCAs) during the formal turn-over at the Provincial Demonstration Farm.

Farmer's coop in Lake Sebu receives P10M-worth dairy project

by ANNA LIZ V. CABRIDO

THROUGH an endorsement from the Provincial Veterinary Office, Highland Agriculture Credit Cooperative accepted the P10M-worth of dairy project from the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC).

Dr. Kelvin Lucena, Veterinary Officer IV, said

PCC turned over 50 buffalos, 2 motorcycles, a unit of desktop computer, a stove, a freezer for milk storage and other dairy equipment to a farmer's coop in Barangay Luhib, Lake Sebu.

"The project explores to maximize intervention and

assistance to farmers, livestock raisers and other agricultural stakeholders," Lucena said.

PCC based at the University of Southern Mindanao intensified its efforts to ramp up the dairy sector through its ALAB

Karbawan Project.

However, PCC said that the project is focused on alleviating malnutrition among indigenous people in Upper Valley, South Cotabato.

In 2020, PCC launched the Accelerating Livelihood Buildup (ALAB) Karbawan project in Lake Sebu to fight malnutrition.

A previous report revealed that children in SOCKSARGEN region were not milk drinkers. A glass of milk (200ml) will give calcium, protein, iodine, potassium, phosphorus and vitamins B2 and B12.

A similar project worth P9M was given to two farmers groups in South Cotabato in 2016.



Philippine Carabao center with technical assistance of Provincial Veterinary office turn-over dairy project to beneficiaries in Brgy. Luhib, Lake Sebu. (photo courtesy: Joey Hechanova)

Eight LGUs in South Cotabato pass ‘Good Financial Housekeeping’ in SOX

by ANNA LIZ V. CABRIDO



DILG-Provincial Director Atty. Rochelle D. Mahinay-Sero

KORONADAL CITY—The South Cotabato Provincial Government along with eight other local government units in the province are certified 2021 Good Financial Housekeeping passers, the Interior and Local Government in SOCCSKSARGEN region announced.

In a Facebook post of DILG 12, South Cotabato LGU got a 73 percent passing rate.

Meanwhile, the online announcement revealed that passers of GFH in South Cotabato were the City of Koronadal, Banga, Norala, Polomolok, Suralah, Tboli, Tupi, and Sto. Nino.

The 2021 Seal of Good Financial Housekeeping is presented to a Local Government Unit that passed the financial transparency and instituted public reporting of budget and expenditure of local governments.

GFH carries “tama and maayos na serbisyo,” which is also the present administration battle cry for good governance.

ACTM aims for capability-building trainings for 2022

by FRUTO C. SUMAGAYSAY JR.

THE Arts, Culture, Tourism and Museum (ACTM) Unit plans to conduct series of capability-building trainings for 2022 in partnership with the Department of Tourism (DOT) 12.

Senior Tourism Operations Officer Argee Ryan Asaria, ACTM chief disclosed that his office wanted to develop the skills of tourism professionals, service providers, officers and stakeholders which is also the objective of DOT 12. ACTM requested assistance from DOT 12 for the conduct of 10 trainings for this year.

The requested trainings are Developing and Implementing Local Tourism Plan, Capability-Building Program and Sustainable

Tourism Planning, Tourism Data Management and Analysis, Agri-Tourism 101 Training, Local Capacity-Building for Tourism Risk and Disaster Management, Community-Based Eco-Tourism Training Workshop, Community Guiding, Training on Handicraft and Product Conversion, Public Awareness Campaign on Intellectual Property Rights and Course on Nature Interpretation and Visitor Management on Eco-Tourism.

Asaria added that for 2021, South Cotabato was the top recipient of trainings from DOT 12 numbering at 21, followed by Cotabato and Sarangani provinces with 7 each and Sultan Kudarat province with 4.



Senior Tourism Operations Officer Argee Ryan Asaria

Senior citizens, PWDs get free wheelchairs

by HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEVO

SOME were in tears, others shouted for joy as they received their sought-after wheelchairs. These are some of the reactions coming from the persons with disabilities and senior citizens who were recipients of the free wheelchairs coming from the Provincial Persons with Disability Affairs Unit (PDAU).

Bryan Hervilla, PDAU chief said the provincial government of South Cotabato has allocated Php1.3 million for the purchase of assistive devices such as cranes, crutches hearing aids, and wheelchairs.

For the wheelchairs, at least 200 units coming from the supplemental budget last year were purchased for the first semester. For the second semester, 300 more wheelchairs worth Php1.5 million is expected to come from the Barangay Development Fund under the Office of the Governor. As of press time, at least 163 units



Reynaldo Montecalvo, 60 yrs old and a resident of Brgy. Magsaysay in Polomolok, are in tears and shouted for joy when he finally received his wheelchair delivered by the Provincial Disability Affairs Unit headed by Mr. Bryan Hervilla.

of wheelchairs were already distributed to the beneficiaries. These include Norala, 39 ; Tantangan, 11; Sto. Nino, 25; Suralah, 28; Banga, 8; Polomolok, 7; Koronadal City, 65 and Tboli, 10.

To those who want to avail, kindly submit the Barangay Certificate of Indigency and a whole-body picture of the beneficiary to the Provincial Disability Affairs Unit for validation.

South Cotabato tourism recovers as 1.6 million tourist arrivals recorded

by **FRUTO C. SUMAGAYSAY JR.**

TOURISM in South Cotabato is very much alive and kicking as the province registered 1,575,499 tourist arrivals for 2021, the Arts, Culture, Tourism and Museum (ACTM) Unit reported.

Day visitors or Excursionists accounted for 1,386,091 while overnight guests totaled 189,408 for the province's 10 municipalities and lone city. Foreign visitors (both excursionists and overnight guests) numbered 97.

ACTM Chief Argie Ryan Asaria pointed out that equating these at P500 expense per excursionist and

P1,800 per overnight guest is equivalent, more or less, to P 1 billion revenue that spreads to accommodation establishments, transport, restaurants, gasoline stations, malls, souvenir shops, among others. Likewise, artisans such as weavers, beaders, craftsmen, and even farmers are also beneficiaries of the tourism income, Asaria added.

The summer months of March and April are still the favorite among tourists, registering 163,350 and 197,947 arrivals, respectively. Likewise, the cool months of November, December,



Balibkayan from Pearland, Texas experience Lake Sebu's finest during their stay in South Cotabato.

January and February also got the lion share in tourist arrivals; November – 117,697, December – 165,675, January – 121,655; February – 140,772.

The rest of the months registered as follows; May –

63,212; June – 36,143; July – 72,882 ; August – 97,744; September – 59,271; October – 90,851.

In 20 South Cotabato only registered 400,511 tourist arrivals with 400,014 domestic and 497 foreign visitors.

Lake Sebu remains South Cotabato's top tourist destination

by **FRUTO C. SUMAGAYSAY JR.**

THE municipality of Lake Sebu, the province's eco-cultural capital, is still the top tourist destination among the 11 component LGUs of South Cotabato for 2021, the Arts, Culture, Tourism and Museum (ACTM) Unit reported in their annual report.

Tourist sites registered 526,270 tourist arrivals (day visitors plus overnight guests

Lake Sebu which banners its 7-Falls as its prime). Other favorite sites or attractions

enjoyed by tourists are the lake cruise, tilapia delicacies, cultural immersion, Our Lady of Divine Mercy Shrine, Tdaan Kini Fals, Dreamweavers Hill, Punta Isla Lake Resort, Sunrise Garden Lake Resort, among others.

The next prime tourist destination in the City of Koronadal with 378,821, followed by Norala with 214,740; Tupi with 200,835; Banga 100,466; Tboli 40,014; Sto. Nino 25,757; Tampakan

13,824; Tantaran 7,500; Polomolok 2,916.

Four (4) LGUs of the province, namely; Lake Sebu, Norala, City of Koronadal and Tupi made it as one of the top ten (10) tourist destinations in SOCCSKSARGEN, according to the 2021 SOCCSARGEN Annual Tourist Arrival Report of the Department of Tourism (DOT) 12.

South Cotabato steadily improved its tourist arrival registering a total of 1.6 million 2021 compared to only more than 400,000 in 2020. Before the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the country in 2020, South Cotabato recorded 1.3 million tourist arrival in 2019.

Rice and vegetable farmers receive complete fertilizers from OPAG

by **HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEVO**

VEGETABLE farmers from the municipality of Tampakan received at least forty (40) sacks of complete vegetable fertilizers from the Provincial Government of South Cotabato through the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPAG). Provincial Agriculturist Raul Teves said this assistance is given to help the beneficiaries lower their cost of production and increase their income.

Teves said in his message, "Walang maiwan sa pag-ANGAT dito sa Probinsya. Sinisikap ng probinsya na mabigyan ng ayuda lalo na ang mga nasa sektor ng pagsasaka."

He added despite the pandemic brought about by Covid-19, the services for the farmers and the fisherfolks will continue in the province.

Earlier, 40 rice farmers from Tboli town also received at least one sack of complete fertilizers each. These farmers coming from the barangays of Talufo, Lemsnolon, New Dumangas, Edwards and Kematu were affected by flash floods and landslides that occurred middle of last year. The assistance is set to help these farmers to start anew since their crops were totally washed out.



Seven Falls is still one of the top sites to visit in South Cotabato.



HOW SOUTH COTABATO MAINTAINS ASF FREE?

by ANNA LIZ V. CABRIDO

More than five towns in South Cotabato are on high alert after a case of African Swine Fever (ASF) was recorded in nearby city of General Santos, a 10-minute drive to the nearest village in the province.

Contamination of local pigs from unknown source produced the first case, which quickly spread among the pig and wild boar population in General Santos City. ASF is currently present in North Cotabato, affecting hog farmers, and causing pork production and hog raising to drop.

Fortunately, South Cotabato remained ASF free.

Provincial Veterinarian Flora Bigot recommended the establishment of checkpoints to possible entry and exit areas in the province and seal alternate routes located in far-flung sitios.

On the same day of the discovery of ASF case in GenSan, PVET laboratory personnel gathered blood samples to hundreds of villages that were included in the five kilometer radius from the infected area.

Samples turned out negative.

South Cotabato, where one of the high-end slaughterhouses in the Philippines are located, could not afford to lose millions of pesos to ASF.

With the robust hog industry in South Cotabato, the province delivered, through Biotech Farm, thousands of hogs weekly during the onslaught of ASF in Luzon last year.

In December last year, PVET was awarded the Most Outstanding Swine Surveillance award given by the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry Veterinary Quarantine Station in Region 12 for its intensified implementation of active surveillance in swine hog raisers to protect Region 12 against the threat of ASF.

“Resting in our accomplishment as ASF-free should not be our attitude. The threat in our economy is huge,” Bigot said, stressing on the importance of the province as major source of live pigs.

South Cotabato province has shipped around 51,000 heads of live hogs to Metro Manila for two months last year and at least 10,000 heads of live pigs and frozen products.

As of last year, the Bureau of Animal Industry XII registered 26 hog farms in South

Iparehistro ang inyo nga mga baboy sa Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) kag ipa-insure sa Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC). Magpalapit lang sa Office of the Municipal Agriculturist sa inyo nga lugar para maassist.

Cotabato. There are around 55,000 of hog population in the province and produces over 45,000 heads of hogs a month.

PVET recorded PHP1.5 million in revenues from the issuance of veterinary health certificates, which is required for the transport of the animals from January 1 to March 5 last year.

In 2020, the province earned some PHP10.2 million from such issuances.

“We are ready to ensure that ASF is contained before it reaches South Cotabato, but we need the help of the barangay,” Bigot added. Bantay ASF program in partnership with the barangay government units, hog raiser’s groups and private sector will safeguard the local swine industry.



BRINGING THE GOVERNMENT CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

“FREE TRACTOR SERVICES PROGRAM”

by HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEVO

Manong Gil Perez is all smiled upon seeing his 1.5-hectare rice fields being tilled by the two rotavators.

As these heavy equipment continue to plow his land and pulverize the soil, he calmly stood beside his rice field embankment or “kahon” without worrying about the payment he would make after they finished tilling his land since he has availed of the “Free Tractor Services” program of the provincial government of South

Cotabato implemented by the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist.

Together with his barrio mates from Brgy. Namnama and adjacent barangays of Concepcion and Avanceña in Koronadal City, more than fifty farmers are the recipients of the program through a synchronous farming method.

For almost three decades as a farmer, this is the first time Manong Gil has availed of the services

Nabatyagan namon nga may yara gali sang gobyerno nga handa magbulig para sa mga pegado.

coming from the government.

At first, he thought this is just one of the programs of the government which eventually never materialize.

“Tikal lang man ni guro nga libre, pero indi man magtupa.” He said,

Soon, he heard that his fellow farmers started to mobilize and listed him as one of the recipients, and when he saw before his eyes the two tractor-drawn implements cultivate his farm in preparation for planting, he finally believed.

“Tuod gid man gali. Indi na ni tinikal.” He said beaming with delight,

The free tractor service he availed gave him more than Php8,000 in savings. Without the rotavators, they usually resort to a hand tractor or “kuliglig” for their land preparation which is usually paid during harvest or “charged to crop” at seven (7) sacks per hectare, making it 14 sacks a year since they plant in two cropping seasons. Manong Gil disclosed that for the main cropping season, his yield

reaches at least 120-150 sacks for this 1.5-hectare land. For the second crop, his yield reaches 90-110 sacks.

There are still so many expenses needed after the land preparation, but having availed of the free tractor service is already a big help for them since the savings they incurred can be used for other expenses like seedlings and farm inputs instead.

To date, more than 400 marginalized farmers already availed of the program after it was launched by the Provincial Government of South Cotabato last year.

Out of the three initial farm machinery availed by the OPAG, at least five farm machinery composed of two Rotavators and three Tractors are servicing the entire province with the aim to lessen the expenses of the farmers in their farm operations.

Provincial Agriculturist Raul Teves said the initiative is in support to the Farm mechanization program of the Department of Agriculture which could provide technological change to attain

food security and self-sufficiency through modern farm technologies.

Based on their guidelines, those who can avail of the program are marginalized farmers from South Cotabato who own or maintain at least two (2) hectares and below land area, applicable for harrowing and deep plowing activities at single passing only.

Teves said that those who want to avail themselves of the free services, can visit the OPAG Office and fill out the requisition slip a week before their scheduled date.

He added, that the OPAG has proposed Php10 million under the devolution transition plan which will be used to procure more farm machinery and other necessary equipment for the farmers.

For Manong Gil and the rest of the farmers who availed of the program, this is what they have to say “Nabatyagan namon nga may yara gali sang gobyerno nga handa magbulig para sa mga pegado.”





One of the major programs of the provincial government since then is known as Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation or AICS, which serves as a social safety net or a stop-gap mechanism to support the recovery of individuals and families from unexpected crises, like illness, death of a family member, may it be natural and man-made disasters and other crisis situations.

There is a big impact on Filipino families, especially it took almost two years when World Health Organization (WHO) declared on March 2020 the pandemic, on the cases of COVID 19. Businesses were closed which caused a dramatic decline in family income, job losses, and restrictions in movements which make it difficult to avail of the basic goods and services such as food and health care.

In order to help and give assistance to the people of South Cotabato, the Crisis Intervention Program was

established. This is to respond primarily to cases of individuals and families in crisis situations. The provision of integrated services such as immediate rescue and protection, direct financial and material, psychological, hospital, and other forms of assistance, including temporary shelter and disaster victims.

However, the Covid 19 pandemic did not hamper the operation and the implementation of the Provincial Government's Crisis Center to address the needs of South Cotabateños on medical, hospitalization, burial, transportation, and financial needs.

More than ever, these are the services of the government that the marginalized sector needed the most and it operates from Mondays to Fridays including weekends and Holidays.

As soon as the office hours start at 8 am, Manong Domeng arrived as early as 7:45 am to position himself at the social welfare assistance desk inside the Capitol compound. He came along the way from the highlands of Lake Sebu to avail of the maintenance medicines of his mother-in-law who suffered a recurring illness that needs continuous medication. Before he left their hometown, he made sure he has

RESPONDING TO INDIVIDUALS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

by JEANLYS S. PARREÑO

Based on the record given by the Social Rehabilitation and Crisis Management Division, the Provincial Social Welfare Development Office (PSWDO), the client served has reached a total of 59,148.

prepared all the necessary needs from the Medical abstract/medical certificate; Prescription, and Laboratory Request; Brgy. Indigency or Residency of the claimant, valid identification cards, among others. Before lunchtime, he already has all the medicines needed for one month.

“Daku na ni nga bulig sa amon. Salamat gid.” he said,

Earlier this month, another beneficiary of hospitalization assistance is the grandchild of Gina Malompong a resident of Barangay Landan, Polomolok. She said it was not hard for them to seek the help of the provincial government. Her grandchild suffered meningitis and was confined at a nearby hospital in their area. A big amount is needed to pay the hospital.

Aling Gina expressed her gratitude for the help extended by the Provincial Government. Though, their family belongs to the IP group she felt the

sincerity of the government without discrimination. She hopes, that this program will continue.

“Governor, Reynaldo S. Tamayo, Jr. has a big heart for the poor and the needy, especially the Indigenous People of South Cotabato like us,” she said,

Based on the record given by the Social Rehabilitation and Crisis Management Division, headed by Ms. Sonia L. Bautista of the Provincial Social Welfare Development Office (PSWDO), the clients served have reached a total of 59,148.

These include 16,869 in 2019; 18,357 in 2020; and in 2021 is 23,922. It kept on increasing each year.

For the year 2021, out of the 191 disaster incidents that were reported and validated, all affected individuals were given emergency shelter kits assistance and 513 were also extended food assistance.

One of the main goals of the program is the provision of complete service to its clients, in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development Office, Region XII (DSWDO 12).



KEEPING OUR MOST VALUED RESOURCE

by HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEVO



There is no greater calling than to serve your fellowmen. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greatest satisfaction than to have done it well.

– Walter Reuther



One of the most important assets in any organization is the human resource or the workforce. They are made up of people who possess the knowledge and skills needed for the advancement and development of an organization be it in the field of business, industry, economy, or even in the government.

The Provincial Human Resource

Management Office as one of the departments in the provincial government of South Cotabato caters to the needs of its employees. It has a mission to commit itself to develop highly relevant career and personnel development systems and programs to hone responsive and competent human resources. It has the vision to become a highly responsive and competent human resource.

This office started as a Division under the Provincial Administrator's Office. On December 3, 2015, the PHRMO was created as a department by virtue of SP Resolution No. 274 enacting ordinance No. 34 series of 2015 which is tasked to ensure the welfare, productivity, and enhancement of skills and competencies of provincial employees through the establishment and maintenance of a sound personnel program.

F E A T U R E



human resources entails a lot of activities based on its core functions. Generally, the main core functions of an organization revolve around staffing, development, compensation, safety, health, and employee and labor relations. All the activities under these areas are all linked altogether to provide mutual benefit for both the employee and the organization. In summary, there are the five core functions that the provincial government implements to achieve a sound personnel program.

It also conducts continuing organizational development with the end view of instituting effective administrative reforms.

Presently, it is composed of two divisions. These are the Human Resource Management Division and the Human Resource Development Division.

With more than 400 employees when it functioned as a regular province in January of 1968, it now caters to more than a thousand personnel. In 2021, there are a total number of 1099 employees in the office. These include 838 permanent employees, 2 temporaries, 34 coterminous, 16 elective officials, and 15 contractual. In addition, from a total of 202 casual positions, 194 are filled-up, while 120 positions are still vacant.

In December 2018, the Civil Service Commission conferred the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management or the PRIME-HRM Bronze award to the Provincial Government of South Cotabato after an onsite assessment and validation which

shows that the province has fully met the Maturity Level II standards of the four (4) core HR Systems, namely 1) Recruitment Selection and Placement (RSP); 2) Learning and Development (L&D) ; 3) Performance Management (PM); and 4) Rewards and Recognition (R&R).

The CSC also cited that the office is continuously compliant with the Civil Service Law and rules in terms of the implementation of HR programs and the maintenance of HR records.

As the central pillar of an organization, managing

These are the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, Human Resource Support Mechanism, Human Resource Policies, Employees Benefits and Welfare, and Public Sector Unionism.



**HARZELYN MAE P. LACONSE
ADMIN ASSISTANT II (HRM ASST.)**

They say millennials are stubborn, fickle-minded, lack ambition, unreliable and lazy.

This is not true for this charming lady who exudes dedication and commitment to whatever tasks are given to her.

At 26, Harzelyn Mae P. Laconse shows a strong work ethic. She wants to emphasize that despite being young, they should not be generalized since they also possess essential qualities which are beneficial to the workplace.

She says, aside from

being tech-savvy millennials can also be motivated to public service, passionate about learning, open, and adaptive to changes.

As a young wife and mother to a bubbly three-year-old little boy, her journey is not easy. She has to juggle work and family duties to achieve balance in her career and personal life.

Prior to government service, her previous employment in two private companies was HR-related.

Unlike in private companies which she has to deal with one office only, working in the provincial government requires a broader scope which

entails dealing with the whole organization composed of different departments.

“Being open to learning is important in order to carry on with every duty and responsibility,” she said.

She realized that every now and then, there are so many changes in the systems and processes that one has to cope with the changing times.

“It is not enough that we have to settle ourselves with the old ways”, she said,

Aside from the training and constant nurture from her colleagues, she has gained so much learning.

Being new in the organization, the support from her co-employees helps her to adjust easily and cope with her responsibilities.

But this is where she has found true happiness and fulfillment.

Along the way, she realized that one has to further improve knowledge and skills to cope with the time and need. Seeking advice and learning from her supervisors and older officemates helped her a lot.

“One should not be stagnant, learning should be constant”, she said,

Aside from the perks of having the security of tenure, “I want to grab any chance to improve myself.” she said,

Presently, she enrolled herself in a Master’s Degree in Public Administration in a nearby university to equip herself with more knowledge and skills.

“I do not limit myself, I am always open to opportunities for advancement”, she added.

Her advice to those who want to enter public service is always to work professionally and put personal matters in a different perspective.

Being raised in a government-inclined family, she sought every opportunity to be into government service. She envisions herself that she will grow old serving the public.



She welcomes everyone with her radiant smile whenever she deals with clients.

There is no dull moment for her as she radiates that cheerful disposition in the workplace.

She sees to it that every client served is satisfied with any services extended to them.

At 55, this is still spirited and full of dynamism.

Ms. Merlyn Doctolero Esteban, is a mother of four and is presently an Administrative Assistant II, at the Office of the Provincial Human Resource and Management Office under the Human Resource Development Division (HRDD).

Ate Merlyn, as she is fondly called by her friends and colleagues has an extensive number of years serving both the government and private sector.

For her 36 employment years, she has spent 20 years in different private offices and 16 years in government service.

As to her employment status, she has experienced various positions such as coterminous elective, and private until being able to have a permanent or career position.

She disclosed that her government service started at the Human Resource office in her hometown in Polomolok, after which she handled various assignments for five years.

At present, she is still one of the dedicated workers of the province for 11 years now.

With these backgrounds, she has become a well-adjusted person that can withstand pressures in the

workplace.

“My experiences made me a people-oriented individual since I deal with various kinds of individuals all the time”, she said.

Her greatest learning in public service is to have a more compassionate heart for all.

“We need patience and understanding to all of our clients”, she said.

Looking forward, just like any employee, she also aims to get a higher position if given a chance. She believes, she still has more to give in the fulfillment of the goals of the organization.

**MERLYN DOCTOLERO ESTEBAN
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT II**



**JUBEN SUBALDO
ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE**

Popularly known as “Jojo” inside and outside the Capitol, he is not new to public service. Having been with the provincial government for 25 years now, he has served four governors since 1997 up to the present.

His entry into public service was not easy since he does not have enough educational background.

“Nag-umpisa ako nga volunteer lang sa dorm sa social welfare department.” He disclosed.

During those days, he was only given allowances or free meals out of his services. “Wala ko reklamo, instead gapasalamat ako,” he said.

His hard work and perseverance landed him a job with permanent status. Despite being a utility worker, Jojo is widely known in every office because of his contagious smile and cheerful disposition.

“Bisan amo lang ko sini, palangga ko ang akon trabaho.” He beams,

Unlike other employees who does their jobs at 8am to 5pm, he has a flexible time schedule.

His work started as early as 6:30 am to 7:30

am. Before employees arrive at the office, he is already there to clean. He sees to it that the floors, the comfort room, including the lobby are spotless, and there is sufficient drinking water for all.

He also sees to it that garbage is well-segregated and properly thrown away every day.

From 9 am to 12 noon, he goes back to the office, and from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm, he resumes his work in order to fulfill the mandatory 8-hour work schedule daily.

Aside from these, he also does other office functions such as follow-up documents, and other errands when necessary.

Sometimes he goes beyond what is needed to do. When the exigency of service calls for it, he is willing to take overtime even if this would entail no additional pay at all.

“Willing gid ako, para makabulig man ako sa gobyerno”, he said.

At 52, his greatest dream is to be able to retire with a clean reputation.

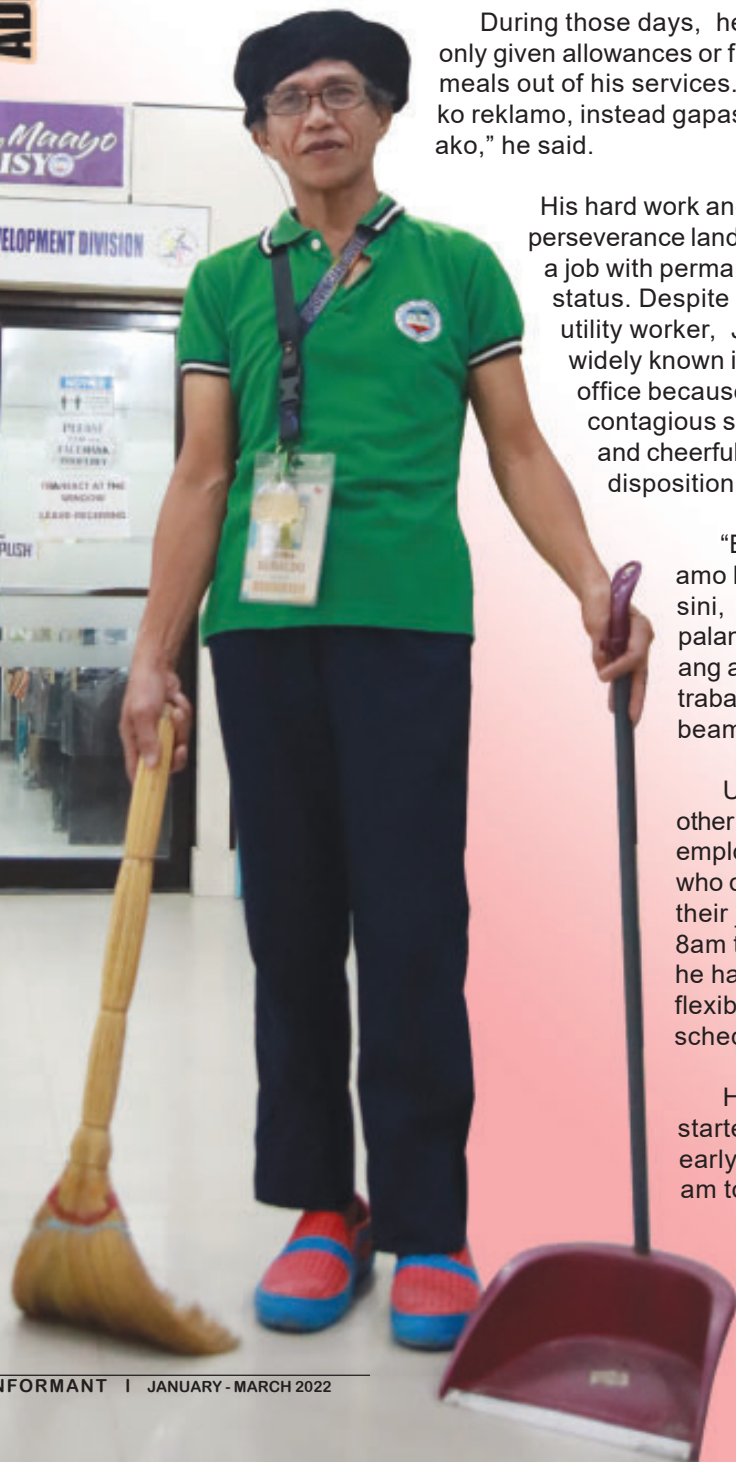
“Maske utility lang ako, gusto ko malimpyo ang akon panerbisyo.” He added.

Considered as one of the lowest ranking positions in the organization, he wants to be treated fairly with the same amount of respect by his peers.

He disclosed that whenever there are some people who treat him ill, he just stays calm and never hits back.

Patience and humility are the values that he wants to nurture and sustain in his workplace.

“Gusto ko matawhay lang kag tanan akon mga friends.” He said,





TULOY LANG ANG PAGBABAKUNA.

Kailangan nating pabakunahan ang ating mga anak. Bilang mga kawani ng gobyerno, marami tayong nakakasalamuha at ang mga anak natin ay nangangailangan ng dagdag protekyon laban sa covid. Ipakita natin na tayo ay ehemplo para sa nakararami at susunod na lamang yong iba.

REYNALDO S. TAMAYO, JR.
GOVERNOR



FOSTERING TOURISM IN TIME OF CRISIS

by HYDEE S. TEMPLONUEVO



We should embrace that mindset that “tourism is everybody’s business”, and we should support local products and services in order for our economy to thrive.





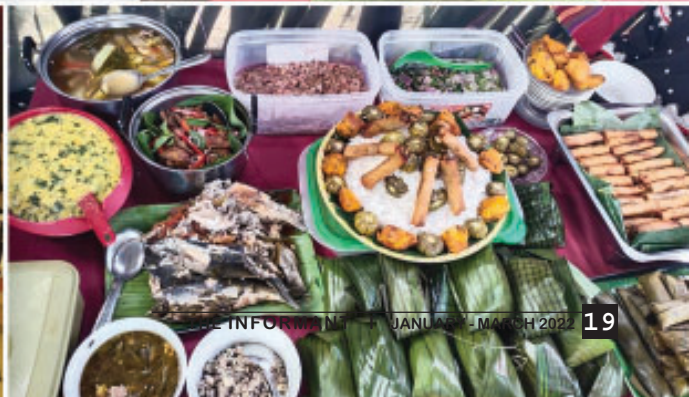
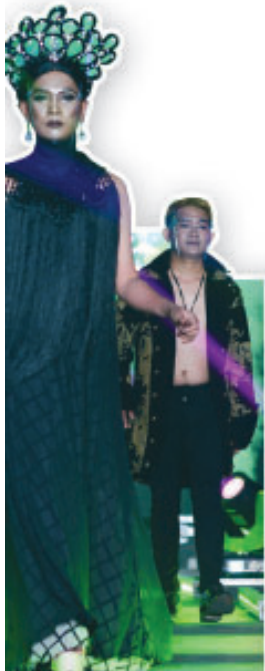
For a province hardly hit by the pandemic, any economic activity to venture nowadays is uncertain. Tourism as one of the major industries and all of its sectoral components are greatly affected, be it in the field of transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, and travel services. Thanks to the resiliency of the people.

Despite the setback there should be no stopping, the passion and the initiatives to promote the pristine natural resource and the unique cultural heritage must continue.

The impact of the tourism industry in the province is huge that it has generated jobs for its skilled workers but has also given revenue for the local government.

We should embrace that mindset that “tourism is everybody’s business”, and we should support local products and services in order for our economy to thrive.

The past two years are full of challenges but looking back, we can draw strength to move further. Here are some of the initiatives the provincial government of South Cotabato has undertaken in support to the local tourism industry but still in adherence to health protocols.





CHOOSING THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST COVID 19

by ANNA LIZ V. CABRIDO

Trusting COVID vaccines is the best thing to do. Consider it as a precious gift to humankind worth the sleepless nights of the scientists. However, fear, worries, and anxieties about the vaccine are normal reactions of the people, especially when there is lack of information. Knowledge is power. The power of information changes behavior.

We spoke to different people who have received COVID vaccines about their experiences and their present health condition.

Marcelina Cabading, a resident of Barangay Magsaysay, City of Koronadal, spoke to *The Informant* how she was convinced to get COVID 19 vaccine.



...right now, clinical trials on COVID 19 vaccines are good with regards to the safety and effectiveness...



“I am fully vaccinated and just waiting for my booster dose. My grandchildren inspired me to get out and get vaccinated,” the 63-year-old grandmother said.

She believed that vaccine could boost immunity against the deadly Corona Virus.

“My anxiety and fear suddenly vanished. I am more at peace now than before that I haven’t vaccinated.

With misty eyes, Marcelina said that her grandchildren are her inspiration to fully immunized herself against pandemic.

“I want to live longer so that I could guide my grandchildren,” she stressed out.

Meanwhile, in Barangay Carpenter Hill, a stroke-patient Romeo Jaculo got his first COVID vaccination last November, 2021. Half of his body was paralyzed because of brain attack five years ago. When *The Informant* team visited him recently, he happily shared that he is already fully vaccinated.

“I didn’t experience after effects like fever, cough and runny nose after I got my second dose of

COVID 19 vaccine,” he said.

He encouraged others to visit the nearest vaccination sites and get vaccinated right away.

“Vaccines are good for all of us and make us all safe against COVID 19,” he explained that he hurriedly asked for vaccination despite his health condition for his safety against the deadly virus.

Meanwhile, Dr. Raphael Abacan, a barrio doctor of the Department of Health and assigned in Tboli, South Cotabato, shared his insights about the efficacy of the vaccines.

“Right now, clinical trials on COVID 19 vaccines are good with regards to the safety and effectiveness,” he however said that the process, “did not undergo the regular process but the involved procedure are approved through the emergency used authorization.”

He explained that COVID vaccines that were distributed in the Philippines undergone research and doctors are

monitoring adverse side effects and reported to DOH.

He warned the public that vaccinated people could still be infected.

“Our vaccines are not 100 percent safe. In fact, as the virus mutate, there is a drop in our body immunity. But it does mean that the vaccine failed to fight the virus,” Abacan further explained.

He said that vaccines are one of the methods to fight the virus. Human needs different levels of protection to intensify the bout against COVID.

“Pandemic does not end even everybody will be vaccinated. Booster vaccine is created to to increase level of immunity. It increases anti-bodies,” he said.

In the field of medicine, Dr. Abacan believed that “there is one thing that intensifies the immune system and that is vaccine,” he added.



THE PEACE AND SOLITARY FRESHWATER CLAMS

by ANNA LIZ V. CABRIDO

Freshwater clams or locally known as *agihis* are abundant in rivers and streams in South Cotabato. It is a kind of small shellfish. There are 10 river system in the province and *agihis* are common inhabitant in the system. However, in Lake Sebu, freshwater clams are sold along the road, inviting tourists to taste a unique aquaculture of the province.

Keteng is the local name of freshwater clam among Tboli of South Cotabato. It needs simple preparation. Common recipes among

the communities in the province is freshwater clam soup and clam cooked in a sauce including soy sauce, vinegar, and crushed garlic.

Clams habitually embed themselves, partially or completely, into the fine substrate (sand); spending a huge chunk of their time immersed in the deep bed. Other times, they would move briefly around the tank or just sit and relax comfortably on top of the substrate.

In Southeast Asia, these species are known as the golden clam,



prosperity clam, pygmy clam, or good luck clam.

Freshwater clams have the tendency to promote clarity of the water by filter-feeding on particulate matter and phytoplankton.

Keteng is the local name of freshwater clam among Tboli of South Cotabato. It needs simple preparation. Common recipes among the communities in the province is freshwater clam soup and clam cooked in a sauce including soy sauce, vinegar, and crushed garlic.



CONVERGENCE TEAM TRACKS WATER SYSTEM AND OTHER PROJECTS OF SOUTH COTABATO IN SITIO BLIT

by **EFREN M. FRANCISCO**

N

ed, Lake Sebu-South Cotabato's Convergence Program for Poverty

Reduction inspected and monitored the on-going water system and other projects of South Cotabato in Sitio Blit, Ned, Lake Sebu.

The 2.5 kilometer-stretch from the water source to Sitio Blit proper is on-going water system. The water system can support all five puroks of Sitio Blit. The team also monitored the development of three Classroom-building and the Polosubong-Pidaw-Blit road opening.

Community Affairs Officer Ma. Ana Uy, team leader of the group, said that these projects could give a comfortable life for the community of Sitio Blit and

for the neighboring sitios.

"For five decades the people of Sitio Blit longed for potable water, comfortable and accessible roads and cozy classroom for education, once these projects are completed they will surely feel the progress," Uy said.

Engr. Montazer Latip led the monitoring and inspection of the projects, while Ma. Ana Uy, Cris Pingkunn Fuentes, Alfredo Galino Jr., Novie Aban and Scherazaide Beltejar conducted an orientation on financial management and organized the sector for women and Romel Evangelio on the other hand conducted the geo-tagging for the projects.

Aside from the said activities, the team gave out used clothing to the community.



F E A T U R E